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Across the Geo-political Landscape
Chinese Women Intellectuals' Political Networks in the Wartime Era 1937-1949

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**Across the Geo-political Landscape: Chinese Women Intellectuals' Political
Networks in the Wartime Era 1937-1949**

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Abstract

Examining women intellectuals' political networks across different political parties, organisations and institutions, my PhD thesis aims to provide an in-depth analysis of women intellectuals' political engagement, communication and identification during the War of Resistance (1937-1945) and the following Civil War (1946-1949). Taking "network" as an approach to study modern Chinese history, this thesis aims to reveal and interpret the historical dynamics of war, politics and gender in the 1930s and 1940s China, at national, local and individual levels.

Focusing on "women intellectuals" as both a social and political group active in the KMT-held major cities, this thesis places their networks in the spaces of knowledge and identity making, in the context of China's war and crisis. I consider the process of their political engagement and identification as both a reflection and a component of the wartime geo-political landscape. I also argue that the War of Resistance enlarged the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for women intellectuals' political networking cross party lines and political boundaries. These spaces were never fixed, but changing according to the social, political and economic conditions, within which women intellectuals' political identification with the KMT, the CCP, and the minor political parties were shaped and reshaped.

Breaking through the "barrier" years of 1937, 1945 and 1949, this thesis aims to demonstrate both the consistencies and variations in women intellectuals' political networking, not only during the War of Resistance, but also before and after the War. And avoiding a teleological view of the wartime women's movement based on CCP narratives after 1949, I will not only analyse archival documents collected from non-CCP organisations but also explore the personal accounts of women intellectuals who held different political affiliations during the War. By revealing the complexity, diversity and flexibility of women intellectuals' political networks, this thesis will deepen the current knowledge of the social and political transformations in wartime China.

List of Abbreviations

ACWF: All-China Women's Federation (1949-present)

CCP: Chinese Communist Party (1921-present)

CWA: China Women's Association (1945-mid 1950s)

DL: Democratic League (1941-present)

KMT: Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party 1919-present)

NARC: National Association for Refugee Children (1938-1946)

NSA: National Salvation Association (1936-1949)

PPC: People's Political Council (1938-1948)

SSCA Women's Committee: the Women's Committee of the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association (1940-1946)

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

YWCA: Young Women's Christian Association

WAC: "New Life Movement" Women's Advisory Council (founded in 1936, expanded in July 1938)

WACP: Nanjing Women's Association for Cultural Promotion

WCTU: Women Christian Temperance Union

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Introduction

The protracted wars in China in the late 1930s and 1940s enlarged the social and political spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement. When the Japanese invasion threatened the provinces in east China, Xia Bengying was a young woman aged 23, living in Liu'an, a small town of Anhui Province. To answer the call for national resistance, Xia joined the "Women's Resistance Society" (妇女抗敌会) led by the Kuomintang (KMT) Central Women's Movement Committee (国民党中央妇女运动委员会). During the defence of Greater Wuhan in 1938, Xia was assigned to work for the expanded "New Life Movement" Women's Advisory Council (新生活运动妇女指导委员会 hereafter WAC) led by Madame Chiang (Song Meiling) in Wuhan. Mainly in charge of protecting refugee children, she worked for the WAC as well as for the National Association for Refugee Children (中国战时儿童保育会 hereafter NARC). Not long after the fall of Wuhan, Xia began an arduous journey westward to the hinterland. Four months later she arrived in Chongqing, the wartime capital of China, where she reported directly to Liu Qingyang, the director of the WAC training department.

"National resistance", however, was not the only theme which could be used to summarise Xia Bengying's political career during the wartime era. Disappointed by the stagnant work at the WAC and frightened by the frequent air raids in Chongqing, Xia Bengying finally decided to leave the WAC and the NARC to study at Chaoyang University, one of the many universities that had moved to the southwest during the War.¹ In the following five years she

¹ In this thesis, "the War" refers to the War of Resistance (1937-1945), also known as the Second Sino-Japanese War fought primarily between China and Japan, and merged into the greater conflicts of the Second World War. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937 marked the beginning of the total war between the two countries, and the war stretched on for 8 years. Following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet invasion of Japanese-held Manchuria, the war was finished with the Japanese surrender on September 9,

almost disappeared from the intellectual and political circles of Chongqing, until she was suddenly approached by Lao Junzhan and Zhong Fuguang, both the founding leaders of the China Women's Association (中国妇女联谊会 hereafter CWA), a left-wing² organisation supported by the Communist Party (CCP) and the Democratic League (DL) in Chongqing in 1945. With references from Zhong and Lao, Xia joined the CWA and established a left-wing women's group. In the meantime, with the help of Lao Junzhan, she also returned to work for the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee and became one of the directors. In 1946 Xia Bengying returned to Nanjing, and in 1947 she was elected by the KMT Women's Movement Committee as a delegate to the first National Assembly in Nanjing.

Xia Bengying's political experience reflects the ever changing geo-political landscape of wartime China, not only in terms of her engagement with the various political locales, institutions and organisations during the War, but also her tentative if ambivalent identification with the CCP, the Party which later decided both her political and personal life. After the communist takeover in 1949, Xia Bengying wrote a short memoir on her wartime political experience, which debunked the "fake election" controlled by the KMT before the first National Assembly. She also detailed her struggles against the "C.C. Clique" (C.C.系) women within the KMT Women's Movement Committee,³ headed by Chen Yiyun, Liu Hengjing and Shen Huilian, who were KMT veterans and also leaders of women's suffrage movement during the War. Using the political language of the CCP when producing her

1945. For more information, please refer to Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1949: The Struggle for Survival* (UK: Penguin Books, 2013).

² In this thesis, I use the term "left-wing networks" to refer to the social relations and political contacts formed between democratic intellectuals and communist activists, who shared the same goal of terminating the KMT's dictatorship and achieving national resistance as well as political democracy. Therefore "left-wing" refers to a broad range of political affiliations maintained by wartime intellectuals with the CCP, the minor democratic parties and the KMT left wing.

³ The C. C. Clique or Central Club Clique was one of the political factions within the KMT in the Republic of China. It was led by the brothers Chen Guofu and Chen Lifu, friends of Chiang Kai-shek. Please refer to Lloyd E. Eastman, Jerome Chen, Suzanne Pepper and Lyman P. Van Slyke, *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949* (The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1991), 27.

wartime memory, Xia Bengying evaluated her political experience during the War, not based on her identification with the women's movement, but on her identification with the CCP.

However, Xia did not join the CCP. On 4 June 1950, she filled in the application form to join the Revolutionary Committee of Chinese Kuomintang (民革), one of the eight minor political parties tolerated by the CCP after 1949:⁴

Date/Time	4 June 1950
Name	Xia Bengying
Supporters and friends	Lao Junzhan (prominent women's leader, one of the founders of the Jiu-San Society), Shi Fuliang (prominent democratic intellectual, one of the founders of China Democratic National Construction Association 民建) Zhong Fuguang (prominent women's leader, the wife of Shi Fuliang) Xu Youqing
Previous political status	Member of the KMT
Previous position	Chief director of the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee in charge of women's welfare, 1946
Previous participation in democratic movement	In 1945, I joined the CWA, founded its Chongqing Jiangbei branch, and established a women's reading society. In 1946, I participated in the democratic movements at Cangbaitang and Jiaochangkou, Chongqing.
Political motivation	To achieve the "new democracy"
Previous and present political stance	I supported democratic politics in the past, and now I believe in the "new democracy"
Referees	Yu Lihui, Wang Xiaozhi

Table 1: Xia Bengying's application form for joining the Revolutionary Committee of Chinese Kuomintang⁵

⁴ Xia Bengying, "Wode xiaoshi" [My Short History], 1949, Nanjing Municipal Archives (NMA), 7004-1-1.

⁵ Xia Bengying personal documents, NMA, 7004-1-1.

This application form not only reflects Xia Bengying's political engagement with different political parties and groups during the War but also the changes in her political ideas and identities after the War. Although it seems that subjects of "warfare" and "violence" were somehow missing from her personal narratives, traumas and ruptures were apparent in her case in terms of the frequent departures, dislocations and displacements the War inflicted on her from Wuhan to Chongqing, and from Chongqing to Nanjing. In this short memoir she wrote in 1949, Xia Bengying did not detail her family background or her social relations. However, judging from her education and career during the War, it is not difficult to see that she was a well-educated female intellectual who mentioned wide social relations with prominent intellectuals and political leaders of the time, such as Lao Junzhan, Zhong Fuguang and Shi Fuliang.

Xia Bengying's story was not exceptional in wartime China, and it offers me an important angle to reinterpret the social and political transformations in China during its bitter war with Japan (1937-1945) and during the intensifying conflicts between the KMT and the CCP, which eventually developed to be the Civil War (1946-1949). When I compare Xia Bengying's educational, social and political background as well as her political locations, positions and identities with that of many other women intellectuals of her kind, I start to have an in-depth understanding of the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for women's political engagement during the War. These spaces were never fixed but shifted along with the fast changing socio-political conditions of wartime China in the late 1930s and 1940s; and within these spaces, the political identities of Chinese women intellectuals like Xia Bengying were shaped and reshaped.

The wartime era (1937-1949)⁶ is a formative time in twentieth-century Chinese history. Numerous political parties, factions and organisations competed for power and for reforms, and the Chinese Communist Party co-opted minor democratic forces to reinforce a civil opposition in order to bring about constitutional governance and the "new democracy". The anti-Japanese United Front across the nation also supported a relatively tolerant and inclusive

⁶ As will be further discussed in the introduction, I share Rana Mitter's view and consider the period of War of Resistance and the following Civil War as the wartime era in China.

political framework for Chinese intellectuals to work together despite their diverse social and political backgrounds. The shift of political and cultural centres from Nanjing and Shanghai to the hinterlands and the migration of Chinese elites to Wuhan, Chongqing and Kunming provided women intellectuals like Xia Bengying with a new space to develop social connections and networks, and further to use them for political engagement.⁷ As Xia Bengying's case shows, Chinese women intellectuals, who were well educated in the 1920s and 1930s and influenced by the May Fourth movement, became politically mature and ambitious when a world war in Asia was looming large.

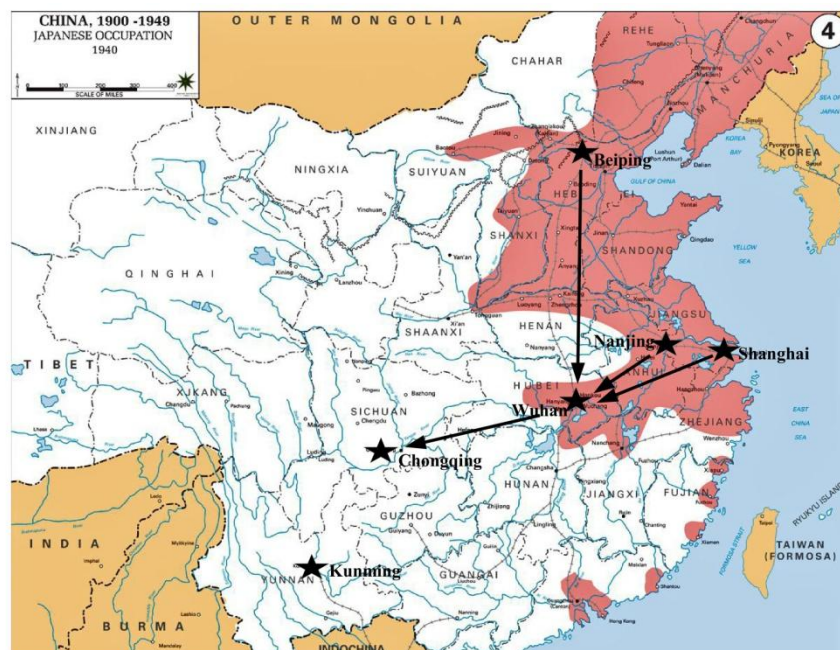


Fig. 1. The map of China under Japanese occupation (1940)⁸

⁷ “As a contemporary sociologist put it, 90% of the highest level intellectuals migrated west, 50% of the mid-level cultural workers, and only 30% if the lower level intellectuals.” Shen Benwen, “Xiandai Zhongguo Wenti” [Contemporary China’s issue], 1946, cited by Stephen MacKinnon, “Refugee Flight at the Outset of Anti-Japanese War” in Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon eds., *Scars of War: the Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 261.

⁸ This map highlights the urban sites where women intellectuals held their resistance networks, and the arrows show the directions of their wartime migrations; the red parts are the occupied areas by 1940.

Source of the original map: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War.

Like the May Fourth period⁹ in modern Chinese history, the wartime era saw the enlargement of the social and political spaces for women intellectuals to develop women's networks and to engage in national politics. However, women intellectuals' political networking during the War manifests different patterns compared with that in the 1920s. First of all, a Resistance network that included not only the major political parties but also the minor political parties and groups¹⁰ was maintained among Chinese intellectuals during the wartime era, which supported women's political engagement across party lines. Second, the wartime migration and mobilisation provided women intellectuals with the opportunities to leave their families and hometowns and therefore broadened their social and political relations. Third, the establishment of national women's organisations such as the WAC, the NARC and the CWA in the late 1930s and 1940s provided political and institutional support to women's movements during the War, and offered women intellectuals a platform to communicate, work and publish together, despite their different social origins and political backgrounds.

Focusing on women intellectuals as both a social and a political group, this thesis places their networks in the wartime spaces for their political engaging and knowledge making as intellectuals, political activists and also as women. I therefore regard the processes of women

⁹ Here the May Fourth period refers to the period of May Fourth and New Cultural Movements in the late 1910s and early 1920s, which saw growing demands among Chinese intellectuals and student activists for family reforms and gender equality. For more information, please see Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1986).

¹⁰ Here by "minor political parties and groups" I mean the political umbrella of the Chinese Democratic League founded as the Federation of Democratic Parties in 1941 and restructured and renamed as the Democratic League in 1944 when it opened its membership to individuals. Six minor political parties and groups were joined to make the DL: the Youth Party, the National Socialist Party, the Third Party, the Rural Reconstruction Association, the Vocational Education Society and the National Salvation Association. For more information, please refer to Anthony Shaheen, *The Chinese Democratic League and Chinese Politics 1939-1947* (University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, London, England, 1977).

intellectuals' political networking and identification as both a reflection and a component of the outer wartime political landscape. The aim of the thesis is not to produce a historiography of women intellectuals' political networks as the missing part of a teleological history of either the women's movement or the "national resistance" dominated by either the KMT or the CCP, but to reveal and reinterpret the dynamics of war, politics and gender in 1930s and 1940s China beyond both the categories of "women's emancipation" and "national resistance".

In the following sections of my introduction, I will first specify what I mean by "women intellectuals" in this thesis. I will then go through the existing scholarship concerning "women's emancipation" and "national resistance" in modern Chinese history in order to demonstrate how my research on women intellectuals' political networks complements the understanding of the two themes. I will further introduce the key concepts used for my analysis, such as "network" and "space", and explain how they can help enrich our knowledge of women intellectuals' political engagement and identification during the wartime period. At last, I will move on to my chapter structure and main arguments, followed by the overview of the primary sources employed in this thesis.

Identifying "women intellectuals"

The term "women intellectuals" conveys a combined meaning of two Chinese terms: upper-class women (上层妇女) and well-educated and intelligent women (知识妇女), which were interchangeably used by women intellectuals themselves in the 1930s and 1940s, in contrast with a more generally defined lower-class women (下层妇女) or working-class women (劳动妇女).¹¹ I use the term "women intellectuals" to distinguish a group of women elites who grew up in an upper-class family and were educated to at least the college level

¹¹ For example, in Zhu Wenyang, "Zhonghua funü huzhuhui chenglidahui jilue" [The Short Summary on the Launching Conference of the Chinese Women's Community] published in *Women's Life* in 1937, Zhu wrote that "our guest Shi Liang, pointed out the different tasks for women intellectuals (zhishi funü) and lower-class women (xiaceng funü) during the War of resistance." SMA, C31-6-260, 421

and therefore capable of participating in public affairs actively and independently, in particular those who took the initiative in reshaping the political landscape of wartime China by playing prominent roles in different political parties and women's organisations in the 1930s and 1940s. I agree with Helen Schneider that these women intellectuals were "literate and hence had cultural power, and they saw themselves as more civilisationally advanced and necessarily involved in the struggle over culture and political development."¹² As teachers, writers, lawyers, artists or civil servants, most of these women intellectuals belonged to the privileged group of Chinese society and obtained high social respect, independence and security before the War.

However, when the women's movement is seen as tightly related to the development of political parties, women are more likely to be positioned as objects or targets, if sometimes victims of the various political campaigns and manoeuvres, while the active roles played by the well-educated women elites and intellectuals have been largely ignored. As Louise Edwards points out, the excellent, albeit scarce, scholarship on the history of the Chinese women's movement during the years prior to 1949 has, for a number of reasons, focused primarily on women in the communist movement or women workers. Worse still, in the historiography of women's movement dominated by the CCP, the activism of well-educated women intellectuals was either marginalised or denigrated to be seen as "bourgeois feminism".¹³

"Women's emancipation", as a subject that concerned numerous late-Qing reformers and New Culture activists, and as a movement that was supported by the emerging political parties in modern Chinese history, justifies the division between Chinese intellectuals and Chinese women as two unrelated socio-political groups. The former, represented by educated, socially influential and politically powerful men, were seen as the producers and reformers of

¹² Helen Schneider, "Mobilising Women: The Women's Advisory Council, Resistance and Reconstruction during China's War with Japan", *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11:2 (2010): 215; Tani Barlow, "Zhishifenzi [Chinese intellectuals] and power", *Dialectical Anthropology* 16 (1991): 209-232.

¹³ Louise Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy: Women's Suffrage in China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 16.

social norms and ideologies, whilst the later as the objects and targets of the various social and political programmes. Wang Zheng has argued that a Chinese feminist movement emerged as the result of the inclusion of women in men's pursuit of a "Chinese Enlightenment" during the May Fourth era.¹⁴ And as Ma Yuxin's research reveals, many of the various May Fourth women's journals were indeed launched and edited by educated men, who adopted the role of "enlightening" women as well as the Chinese nation.¹⁵ Therefore in modern Chinese history, the major role played by male intellectuals in the producing of feminist discourses parallels the dominant narratives of political parties in the making of the "women's movement". After having interviewed a number of prominent Chinese women intellectuals who had made great effort and achievements during the May Fourth and the wartime era, Wang Zheng has questioned: "Who are our forgotten heroines in this story of 'women's emancipation'?"¹⁶

To fully answer Wang Zheng's question, it is worth asking what roles women intellectuals adopted in the emerging social, cultural and political spaces of modern China where new relations between intellectuals and state authorities were expected to form through the process of national salvation, modernisation and democratisation.¹⁷ By analysing the networks of social and political relations developed by women intellectuals in the wartime period, I therefore identify "women intellectuals" both collectively and individually in the wartime spaces in which they participated in national resistance as well as developed their own political organisations and networks. I apply ideas from Pierre Bourdieu to view spaces in the urban sites of wartime China as systems of relations involving both agents and their social and political positions.¹⁸ Shanghai in 1936, Wuhan in 1938, Chongqing and Kunming

¹⁴ Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral & Textual Histories* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 13.

¹⁵ Ma Yuxin, *Women journalists and feminism in China 1898-1937* (USA: Combria Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, 119-143.

¹⁷ Eleonora Narvselius, *Ukrainian Intelligentsia in Post-Soviet L'viv: Narratives, Identity, and Power* (Lexington Books, 2012), 231.

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 126.

in the early 1940s thus, in the context of war and crisis, enabled different spaces for women intellectuals to organise meetings, forums, tea parties, to identify themselves with different political groups, and to circulate their political ideas and networks.

In the same way that the Cold War and the Soviet system changed the space of intelligentsia in L'viv, the War of Resistance in China also reshaped the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for Chinese intellectuals. For L'viv intelligentsia, their social and political space took the shape of scattered islands of close friends and relatives gathering privately around kitchen tables.¹⁹ For Chinese intellectuals, the situation during the War was even more complicated: On the one hand, the wartime mobilisation and manoeuvres enlarged their spaces for political communication and identification. On the other hand, the military-backed dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek, the political frictions and persecutions between and within different political parties and groups, and the deteriorating economic conditions constantly changed and confined these spaces.

James Wilkinson argues that the defeat of 1940 forced French intellectuals to accept the commitment to resistance and to embrace the creed of political engagement during and after the war. He links the esprit of resistance and the heritage of enlightenment in Europe which called for a return to the ideals of “liberty, equality and fraternity”.²⁰ In contrast, most China historians hesitate to argue for a similar relation between China’s “national resistance” and the May Fourth traditions: Vera Schwarcz believes that the indisputable “national resistance” in China killed Chinese intellectuals’ autonomy,²¹ while Parks M. Coble thinks that in terms of the burgeoning intellectual networks in Shanghai in the 1930s such as the National Salvation Association (NSA), the outbreak of war in 1937 was the beginning of the end.²²

¹⁹ Eleonora Narvselius, *Ukrainian Intelligentsia in Post-Soviet L'viv: Narratives, Identity, and Power* (UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 125.

²⁰ James D. Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 26 & 276.

²¹ Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, 231.

²² Parks M. Coble, “The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai” in Nara Dillon and Jean C. Oi, eds., *At the Crossroads of Empires: Middlemen, Social Networks and State-Building in Republican Shanghai* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

The political and cultural conditions for “resistance” in France and in China are very different. Given the pervasive “wartime cultural mobilisation” along with the propaganda of national resistance, as demonstrated by Stephen MacKinnon,²³ it is understandable that China historians seek to understand better whether the “national resistance” overwhelmed both the public and private spheres of wartime China and thus curtailed the “autonomy” and “freedom” of Chinese intellectuals.

My study of Chinese women intellectuals certainly offers a different angle to understand the influence of wartime mobilisation on Chinese intellectuals: the call for “national resistance” in 1937 did not undermine the May Fourth legacy of pursuing freedom, democracy and women’s rights. Despite the harsh political and economic conditions during the wartime period, women intellectuals were involved in a wide range of social and political movements to achieve constitutionalism, democracy, women’s independence and equal political rights. The warfare caused dislocations and disconnections of women intellectuals’ political networks but certainly did not terminate their political initiatives and activism. This thesis will demonstrate the continuities in Chinese women intellectuals’ political activism and in their diverse political networks in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, despite the fast-changing spaces for their political engagement and identification. As will be shown in the next session, the focus on “women intellectuals”, first and foremost, challenges the dominant narrative of the CCP on the “women’s movement” as led and supported by communists since the May Fourth era, and on “women’s emancipation” as an integral part of the nation’s liberation from the imperialist power and from the KMT’s rule.

Beyond “women’s emancipation”: A dichotomy between “women” and “the state/the party”

Gail Hershatter has summarised the overlapping fields of women’s studies and gender studies on twentieth-century China. She argues that “national modernity” was a dominant

²³ Please see Stephen MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 62-82.

theme that attracted the attention of most feminist historians.²⁴ She views the emerging category of “women” (妇女 or 女性 in a modern context) as a discursive signification of national liberation and modernisation.²⁵ Wang Zheng also notes that when the contentious yet inextricable relations between “feminism” and “nationalism”, as well as between “feminism” and “communism” were previously discussed, “women” were rendered a collective subjectivity in the processes of the nation’s liberation and modernisation, but were largely forgotten as political agents who “responded to, coped with, struggled against, or manoeuvred to change the circumstances around them.”²⁶ However, the interpretation of “feminism”, like that of “nationalism” and “communism”, changed from time to time in twentieth-century China. Wang Zheng has pointed out that, before the CCP established its political domination in China, the party’s definition of feminism by no means monopolised understandings of feminism—the terms of “女权主义” or “妇女主义” not only reflect women’s different political orientations, but also reveal the complicated contestation among competing discourses.²⁷

Historians have also noted the problematic “easy marriage” between “women” and “the nation” in Chinese history and begun to question the reading of women’s history only as a by-product of the nation’s history. Gail Hershatler pays attention to a shift of the temporality and argues that the mainstream historiography composed by a centralised nation to denote historical affairs and national campaigns does not always match the memories of local women.²⁸ Louise Edwards also challenges the convenient connection of “nationalism” to every feminist agenda, and argues that the term nationalism is often unproductive precisely because of its tendency to homogenise a diverse range of ideologies across a wide range of

²⁴ Gail Hershatler, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 4.

²⁵ Gail Hershatler and Wang Zheng, “Chinese History: A Useful Category of Gender Analysis”, *American Historical Review* (Dec. 2008): 1404-1421.

²⁶ Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, 2.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 134.

²⁸ Gail Hershatler, “The Gender of Memory: Rural Chinese Women and the 1950s”, *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28:1 (2002): 309-329.

political systems and structures, especially in the case of early twentieth century China.²⁹ The oral histories of women produced by Ma Yuxin and Wang Zheng both illustrate the sophisticated lives, broad political concerns and wide social activities of women intellectuals in the May Fourth era, beyond the dichotomy of “feminism” and “nationalism”.³⁰ This diverse range of political structures, as well as the already well-established social relations among the educated career women during the May Fourth era, certainly prepared women intellectuals for their further political engagement and networking later in the wartime era.

Given the limited primary sources available in mainland China in the 1970s and 1980s, China historians such as Elisabeth Croll and Christina Gilmartin were both right to place the question of “women” in a socio-political context where women’s roles and identities were constantly redefined and reconstructed to serve the building of a modern nation and the development of political parties, especially the CCP. Croll’s study of “feminism” and “socialism” centres on the social, political and economic changes in twentieth-century China and analyses the different patterns, contents and aims of the women’s movement as a response to state building.³¹ She stresses the dilemma between feminism and socialism in China, or more specifically between the “top-down” ideological and physical mobilisation of women at a national level and the ambiguous and variable interpretations of “the women’s movement” in the still conservative and gender-oppressive local societies.³²

Gilmartin’s study of women in the Chinese revolution in the 1920s also discusses the uneasy relations between “nationalism”, “communism” and “feminism”. She argues that during the early party-building of the CCP in the 1920s women’s projects were tailored to

²⁹ Louise Edwards, “Moving from the Vote into Citizenship: Crafting Chinese Women’s Political Citizenship”, in Nicola Spakowski and Cecilia Milwertz eds., *Women and Gender in Chinese Studies* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 9.

³⁰ Please see Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment* and Ma, *Women Journalists and Feminism in China*.

³¹ Elisabeth J. Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

³² Croll, *Feminism and socialism in China*, 9.

serve both nationalist and communist programmes.³³ Gilmartin interprets “gender” as an important part of the cultural contention in the CCP’s revolution in the 1920s, thus her claim of the death of the women’s movement in 1927 along with the collapse of the first united front is purely based on the changed focus of the communist revolution. However, what have been ignored by Gilmartin are the sophisticated political relations and networks maintained by the women activists who were capable of their own political networking beyond any revolutionary platform.

Reading women’s history as an integral part of the revolutionary history of the CCP leads toward further problems in understanding women intellectuals’ political engagement and identification during the wartime era. The fragmented processes of political positioning and identification among women intellectuals during this period are thus simplified as a one-way choice in favour of the communist, due to “the exhaustion from the protracted wars and the disrepute of the KMT”.³⁴ More important, this teleological perspective makes us take the victory of the CCP for granted without asking how women’s political engagement and identification interacted with, rather than simply reacted to, the political campaigns, manoeuvres and reforms carried out by different political parties and groups in the wartime era.

For China historians, the development of the political parties, the CCP in particular, is an important historical process which influenced women’s movements in twentieth-century China. Using the term “party feminism”, Louise Edwards states that “in China suffrage feminists implicitly endorsed the political party as an institution, but most importantly of all, they endorsed parties as fundamental to national survival.”³⁵ However, this plausible “dependence” of women’s movements on political parties, can make us blind to women’s complex socio-political relations, positions and identities beyond party structures and negligent of their political initiatives and activism cross party lines. Wang Zheng has asked:

³³ Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

³⁴ Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China*, 183-184.

³⁵ Edwards, “Moving from the Vote into Citizenship”, 12

“What were Chinese women doing before the ‘saviour’ [the CCP] was born?” We should take this question further and ask: How did Chinese women intellectuals organise themselves outside of the CCP or the KMT, and how did they continue networking across the diverse political systems and structures after the May Fourth era?

These questions lead to my study of women intellectuals’ political networks in the wartime era—networks that emerged in the complex and interconnected socio-political relations held among female students and intellectuals in universities, who were influenced by the May Fourth movement in the 1920s and who became politically mature and active in the face of the deepening national crisis and the burgeoning War of Resistance against Japan. Avoiding a teleological view on “the rise of the CCP”, I will analyse how women intellectuals’ political engagement, networking and identification interacted with the outer geo-political landscape of wartime China, thus to further the understanding of the survival and development of the various political parties, especially the CCP, during and after the War of Resistance. The wartime mobilisation for national salvation and resistance, to a large extent, justified women intellectuals’ political participation, however, their wartime political engagement, contestation and identification went beyond the rhetoric of “national resistance”.

Beyond “national resistance”: Re-gauging the geo-political landscape of wartime China

The existing scholarship on China’s war with Japan already offers different perspectives for us to understand this formative historic period of China in the twentieth century. The so-called War of Resistance against Japan (抗日战争) has been studied as military conflict, violence, suffering and bitterness;³⁶ as economic changes, struggles and collaborations;³⁷ as different experiences for people in rural and urban areas, in different regions of the occupied

³⁶ Please see MacKinnon, “Refugee Flight at the Outset of Anti-Japanese War”; MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938*.

³⁷ Please see Timothy Brook, “The Pacification of Jiading” in Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon eds., *Scars of War: the Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001); Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Chinese Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

or non-occupied areas;³⁸ it has also been studied as a social mobilisation, a national reconstruction during which propaganda and discourse were produced by different political regimes and parties. Calling the War of Resistance and the following Civil War China's "twelve-year wartime transition", Rana Mitter points out that there is a new interest in China's place in global history and in urban history; a rethinking of the meaning of nationalism and imperialism in China and a new emphasis on war as a vehicle of socio-cultural change.³⁹ Mitter also pays attention to a new interpretation that "downplays, rather than stresses, the differences between the CCP and the KMT, and stresses the continuities along with changes across the 'barrier' date of 1949."⁴⁰ In this view, the wartime era is no longer considered as a bleak period of the KMT failed promise or of the communist "national liberation", but an outward-looking, politically fruitful period that has significant resonances in the present day.⁴¹

Re-gauging the geo-political landscape of wartime China is to re-examine the relations between different regions of the occupied or non-occupied areas, between different political regimes and parties, and between the political authorities and their constituencies. "Women's political participation and networking" thus provides me with an angle to re-gauge the geo-political landscape of wartime China. Avoiding the simplification of either the interpretation of "national resistance" or that of "women's emancipation" during the War, I will demonstrate how the concurrent and interrelated political campaigns for "resistance", "constitutionalism", "peace and democracy" and "women's rights" diversified the forms of and contents in women intellectuals' political networking. By examining the outreaching and interconnected political networks developed by women intellectuals in the late 1930s and 1940s, this thesis will reveal the complexity and diversity in women's engagement with the

³⁸ Toby Lincoln, "The Rural and Urban at War: Invasion and Reconstruction in China during the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance", *Journal of Urban History* 38 (2012): 114-132.

³⁹ Rana Mitter, "Modernity, Internationalization, and War in the History of Modern China", *The Historical Journal*, 48(2005): 523.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

different political locales and institutions during this period, and thus complement the knowledge of the social and political transformations in wartime China.

Women's political movements and activities during the War were far from being scarce or lacking diversity. Gail Hershatter argues that feminists in the 1930s and 1940s did not remove themselves from politics in spite of lukewarm or hostile responses on the part of the ruling Nationalist party, nor did they wait to have rights handed to them by a benevolent government. As a matter of fact, the War saw more middle-class women involved in war-related welfare work, and more young women intellectuals were attracted to feminism.⁴² The War brought opportunities for women to lead public lives and engage in national politics.⁴³ With respect to women intellectuals' engagement in national political institutions such as the People's Political Council (国民参政会 hereafter PPC) and the National Assembly, Louise Edwards also indicates that the "waiting to be" promulgated Double Fifth Constitution of 1936 did provide the ground upon which women voters and women politicians could legitimately mobilise within their party structures and within the political system, despite the instability of the political and military situation in China in the late 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁴ Li Danke agrees with Edwards that women's lives were dramatically changed by war, but more important, women were also changing the political landscape of China during the War. Based on the personal accounts of ordinary women, Li argues that the war mobilisation provided opportunities for traditionally marginalised political groups such as women and middle-ground organisations to step into the political spotlight and to have a voice in China's wartime politics, and the wartime mobilisation tolerated relative political pluralism.⁴⁵

However, as Li also stresses, the overwhelming scholarly attention in the field of women's history in twentieth-century China has been paid to the May Fourth era and the post-1949

⁴² Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, 94.

⁴³ Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92-110.

⁴⁴ Edwards, "Moving from the Vote into Citizenship".

⁴⁵ Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy*; Li Danke, *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 9 & 133.

period, not enough coverage has been devoted to the 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁶ The existing scholarship on the wartime women's movement, as I will show in detail below, still overstates the political boundaries between the KMT and the CCP, thus women's wartime political participation is understood as either a response to the political campaigns under the KMT leadership, or a reflection of the communist revolution. The influence of the United Front under which the KMT, the CCP and the various minor political parties co-opted each other for the same social and political reforms is often neglected. Moreover, to what extent the War itself enabled (or curtailed) the spaces for women intellectuals' political initiatives and organisation was also left unstudied.

Although previous studies have touched on women's nationwide connections and organisations during the War, the focus was put on women's efforts toward social mobilisation, war relief and education;⁴⁷ the complex network of women intellectuals' social and political relations has not yet been analysed in the evolving dimensions of war, politics and gender in the 1930s and 1940s China. As this thesis will demonstrate, women intellectuals' own networks, which emerged and transformed through the various social and political movements in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, continuously empowered women towards engaging in political affairs and communicating beyond the subjects of "national resistance" and "war relief". Moreover, scholarly attention has been largely drawn to the membership, structure and agenda of one particular women's movement or organisation, while it has not been discussed enough how women members gravitated to politics in the first place, how they communicated before organising an event, setting up an agenda and initiating a movement, and how their communication sustained despite the relocations and dislocations of their networks.

In her book *Feminism and Socialism in China*, Elisabeth Croll touches on the development of the WAC—the first nation-wide women's organisation expanded and re-structured in 1938 Wuhan to include women leaders and activists from different political parties and groups

⁴⁶ Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*, 26.

⁴⁷ Please see Helen Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938*.

during the War. However, Croll identifies the WAC as a KMT organisation serving the purpose of social and political mobilisation for national resistance, whose agendas were tailored to fit KMT's political programmes and ideologies.⁴⁸ This “party focus” in researching women's movements during the War, to a large extent, hampered the understanding of the diverse political roles and broad political relations held by women intellectuals across party lines and political boundaries.

Xia Rong's research on the WAC provides detailed information on the active communication and cooperation among the WAC members during the War, who were from different political parties and worked together under the United Front.⁴⁹ However Xia's study is still confined to the membership, agendas and activities of the WAC between 1938 and 1945, leaving it unclear how these prominent women activists from different cities and backgrounds consolidated their political linkages before 1938, and how their political locations, relations and identities changed after 1945. Furthermore, the role played by women intellectuals from minor political parties and groups is missing from Xia's analysis of the WAC during the War. Many WAC members who held active personal and political connections with minor political parties and groups, such as Liu Qingyang, Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun and Shen Zijiu, are simply portrayed as “undercover communists” due to their seemingly apparent sympathy with the CCP.⁵⁰

Louise Edwards' research on women's suffrage movement also has touched on women intellectuals' political engagement during the War. However, Edwards' focus is on the development of the quota campaign during the War rather than women intellectuals' wider political engagement and networking. Therefore like Croll and Xia, she considers women leaders such as Liu-Wang Liming, Shi Liang, Luo Qiong and Wang Ruqi as individual feminists who had little connections with each other and held unchanged political identities before, during and after the War.

⁴⁸ Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China*, 178-184.

⁴⁹ Xia Rong, *Funü zhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng* [The “New Life Movement” Women's Advisory Council and the War of Resistance] (Renmin Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 151.

In fact, we can find the origin of the cross-party political relations and networks among women intellectuals in the period of the National Revolution (1924-1927) under the first KMT-CCP alliance. Gilmartin argues that both the early nationalists and communists tried to integrate women's mobilisation into the political culture of the National Revolution.⁵¹ Women's organisations established during this period such as the KMT Central Women's Department opened doors to young women activists of different political backgrounds, who thus established primitive political connections and personal relations under the KMT-CCP alliance. Gilmartin points out that He Xiangning's leadership and her organisational network unified her staff from different political backgrounds and from different regions; communist women leaders such as Deng Yingchao and Cai Chang were both involved in the work of the Central Women's Department during this period. However, instead of suggesting the continuity in the cross-party networks among these prominent women leaders and in their political activism in the 1930s and 1940s, Gilmartin concludes that the mass mobilisation of women came to an end in 1927 because of the breakup of the alliance between the KMT and the CCP, so as the once prestigious Central Women's Department.⁵²

Inspired by the existing literature on women's political organisation and mobilisation in the Republican era, my thesis therefore seeks to complement the current scholarship from the following perspectives: First, instead of focusing on any particular women's movement or organisation, it examines women intellectuals' political networks across party lines and political boundaries. I will especially emphasise the fragmented processes of women intellectuals' political identification not only with the two major parties but also with minor political parties, in which they adopted complicated political roles and identities rather than simply being a feminist, a nationalist or a communist. Second, tracing the locations,

⁵¹ The first United Front of the KMT and CCP was formed in 1923. The two parties formed the National Revolutionary Army during the Northern Expedition, and many CCP members joined the KMT as individuals during this period. The first United Front ended in 1927 after the KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek purged the communists. For more information about women's mobilisation during the National Revolution, please see Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 195-225.

⁵² Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution*, 162.

relocations and dislocations of women intellectuals' political networks during and after the War, it pays special attention to the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces which enabled but also limited women intellectuals' political engagement and identification. Third, it demonstrates both the consistencies and transformations in women's political networking over the "watershed" years marked by influential historical events such the defence of Greater Wuhan in 1938, the New Fourth Army Incident in 1941 and the communist takeover in 1949. Last but not least, it personalises women intellectuals' wartime experience at a national, local and individual level, to fully reveal both the interactions and contradictions between their various roles, positions and identities in the war context.

"Network" as an analytical perspective

In this thesis, I define "women intellectuals' political networks" as relations and connections built among women intellectuals across different political parties and groups for their political engagement at local, national and even transnational levels. These networks were, first of all, developing and transforming within the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces in wartime China. The wartime migration and mobilisation played important role in the integration and expansion of these networks; while the fast changing political and economic conditions during the protracted wars also resulted in the partial breakdown of some networks.

Furthermore, personal ties and feminist agenda played important role in women intellectuals' political networking beyond party lines and political ideologies. It is important to point out that, women's political networks, in the context of national crisis and resistance, shared social and political recourses with those of their male peers; women intellectuals certainly did not position themselves in the opposition towards men during the War. However, to achieve "national resistance" and "democracy" was not the only goal of women intellectuals who were involved in politics; many of them, despite their different political backgrounds, expected to gain personal independence and a higher social position by joining a women's organisation. The same "woman problem" these women intellectuals faced and

the similar gender roles they adopted or abandoned, to a large extent, tightened their personal linkages and enhanced their political networks. Therefore, to examine women intellectuals' political networks is not only to trace the locations of their groups and organisations, but also to analyse the outer social, cultural and political spaces in which women intellectuals were connected with each other as resisters, political activists, intellectuals and also as women.

“Space” is an important analytical concept I use in this thesis to analyse the development of women intellectuals' political networks and the maintenance of their communication during the wartime era. In the field of social science, Pierre Bourdieu regarded societies and their fragments as spaces or the systems of relations involving both agents and their social positions.⁵³ Applying Bourdieu's idea in this thesis, I view the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces in wartime China as the systems of relations involving women intellectuals as agents, their different roles, positions and identities, which enabled the opportunities for women intellectuals to consolidate political relations and to exert political power.

These spaces were not unconnected but interacted with each other: the hinterland of wartime China was a geographical space marked by its poverty, cultural isolation and lack of modernity, while it was also a political space where the “making of the wartime capital” stimulated the development of popular culture and the change in traditional social norms.⁵⁴ These spaces allowed women intellectuals to enter the public spheres by organising singing, acting and reading groups, women's forums and events, to write and publish so as to exchange and circulate their ideas. More important, these spaces enabled women intellectuals to participate in national resistance and identify with or against different political parties and authorities. However, these spaces were not fixed: The political space enlarged by the alignment of the KMT-CCP United Front at the beginning of the War quickly shrank after the New Fourth Army Incident in 1941, due to the deteriorating conflicts between the two major

⁵³ Bourdieu, *In Other Words*, 126.

⁵⁴ Please see Lee McIsaac, “The City as Nation: Creating a Wartime Capital in Chongqing” in Joseph Esherick ed., *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900 to 1950* (USA: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 174-191; Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*.

parties. While the cultural space for mass movement during the defence of Wuhan in 1938 also shifted after the fall of Wuhan and the departure of intellectuals. In this light, “space” is essential to understanding the formation, maintenance, transformation and breakdown of women intellectuals’ political networks.

Personal ties, such as friendships, kinships and relationships, are what differentiate a political network from a political organisation whose defining feature is its hierarchy and ideology. Because of personal ties, communication within a political network could go beyond political hierarchy, ideology and boundaries. Hans Van de Ven views early communist study groups and societies as “cells” where friends could adopt and reshape Marxism-Leninism and turn it into a mode of communication.⁵⁵ This “mode of communication” formed the thinking of members, supported their values, justified their actions, and eventually transformed them from friends to comrades. However, Van de Ven’s “communist cells” is different from what I mean by “women intellectuals’ political networks”, because women intellectuals’ coalition and organisation did not, from the outset, rely on any particular political party as structure, or political belief as ideology. Rather, because of the feminist agenda of realising women’s social independence and equal political rights, women intellectuals, compared with their male peers who participated in various political parties before the War, were more likely to maintain a broad network of personal ties beyond party lines and political boundaries.

My research project is certainly not the first one that employs “network” as an analytical angle to study history. By analysing the agents, relations and structures not only in one particular historical context but within different historical settings, historians have gained a broad view of the interactions and interconnections between different ideas, institutions, times and spaces. As Gerald D. Feldman puts it, “Networks are more than just a metaphor. In recent decades, research has made considerable process in the measurement and visualisation

⁵⁵ Hans Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: the Founding of the Chinese communist Party* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 4-5.

of the informal relationship between individuals and institutions.”⁵⁶ Networks of trade, diaspora and migration have been studied by historians to understand the development of global empires and the processes of colonisation.⁵⁷ Commercial and religious networks provide historians with important angles to learn the exchanges of goods, personnel and cultures at regional, transnational and global levels.⁵⁸ And focusing on inter-individual and inter-organisational relations, historians have employed network analysis in their studies of socio-political movements and collective actions in different historical contexts.⁵⁹

China historians have also started applying “network” as an analytical angle to reinterpret the processes of political establishment and identity-building at local and national levels. Hilde de Weerdts launched her new research project on elite networks in Song Dynasty Chinese Empire. The project especially aims to examine the role of social and political networking among elites across the Chinese territories in the formation of cultural and political identities, therefore the maintenance of the empire.⁶⁰ Focusing on the prevalent chambers of commerce in early twentieth-century lower Yangtze region, Chen Zhongping’s study reveals the network development among chambers of commerce and its extensive influence on the socio-political formation of modern China. Parks M. Coble has paid

⁵⁶ Gerald D. Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel, *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business and the Organization of the Holocaust* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 7.

⁵⁷ Please see Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Barry Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁸ Please see Chin-Keong Ng, *Trade and Society, the Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683-1735* (Singapore: NUS Press, 1983); Tjil Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks: Eighteenth-Century Diamond Merchants* (UK: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, Limited., 2011); Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁹ Please see Mario Diani, *Green Networks: a Structural Analysis of the Italian Environmental Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995); Feldman and Seibel, *Networks of Nazi Persecution*.

⁶⁰ For more information, please see the project website: <http://chinese-empires.eu/>.

attention to the crucial role played by non-governmental organisations during the National Salvation Movement in 1930s Shanghai, and he emphasises the personal ties among social figures and intellectuals that were as critical to starting political campaigns as formal organisations.⁶¹ Without using the term “network”, scholars such as Michel Hocks and Norman Smith have touched on the various Chinese literary societies which developed through publications and productions of cultures in different socio-political contexts.⁶² Hans van de Ven’s research on the communist “cells” in the CCP’s early history, to a large extent, also takes a “network” angle to view the establishment of Marxism-Leninism among early Chinese communists as a “mode” of communication supported not only by political organisation but also by traditional Chinese values and norms.⁶³

Adopting “network” as an analytical perspective in this thesis, I will concentrate on the shared origins and interests among women intellectuals, their personal ties, social linkages and political affiliations, in order to understand how their wartime networks emerged, transformed or terminated, and how their networks interacted with the outer spaces in the context of war and crisis. For those prominent women intellectuals I am going to introduce in this thesis, the construction of their political identities and the circulation of their political ideas cannot be separated from the formation and transformation of their networks in Shanghai, Wuhan, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Kunming, Beiping⁶⁴ and other urban sites of wartime China.

⁶¹ Please see Chen Zhongping, *Modern China's Network Revolution: Chambers of Commerce and Sociopolitical Change in the Early Twenty Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011); Coble, “The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai”.

⁶² Please see Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937* (Netherlands: Brill, 2003); Norman Smith, *Resisting Manchukuo: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

⁶³ Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade*.

⁶⁴ The name for today’s Beijing between 1928 and 1937, and between 1945 and 1949.

Overview of chapters

This thesis contains six chapters, which are largely organised in chronological order and reflect four different themes. The first theme “the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for women intellectuals’ political networking” is covered through all the chapters but particularly in Chapter 1 and 2, which illustrate the integration of their political networks and the circulation of their resistance ideas through the various political campaigns, manoeuvres and movements at the beginning of the War. The second theme, “the continuities and discontinuities in women intellectuals’ political engagement”, is also reflected in the whole thesis but particularly in the following three chapters: Chapter 3 which focuses on the departures, dislocations and displacements of the left-wing women’s networks after the New Fourth Army Incident and Chapter 4 on the political relocations of women intellectuals’ networks with stronger connections to the CCP by the end of the War, while Chapter 6 on the transformation of women intellectuals’ political networks within the CCP’s united-front framework (统战工作) during the Civil War and in the early years of communist China. Taking an in-depth examination of women’s networks in Kunming in Chapter 5, I base my third thematic argument on a local-level analysis with emphasis on women intellectuals’ political engagement and networking conducted among local women’s communities on campus. The last theme, which is brought about through the entire thesis, centres on the gender perspective of war and politics in 1930s and 1940s China by exploring the war experience of women intellectuals at national, local and individual levels.

I see the social and political changes during the twelve-year wartime period as equally important as warfare and violence. The protracted wars in the 1930s and 1940s changed Chinese women’s lives not only because of the traumatic physical and psychological displacement they had to endure, but also because of the enlarging social and political spaces available to them, where they could develop new identification with a community, an authority and the nation as a whole. China in its late 1930s and 1940s did not only witness military and political conflicts between China and Japan, between the KMT, the CCP, the Japanese puppet troops and the local warlord forces, it also saw the political presence of

minor political parties and groups which were clamouring for constitutionalist reforms and cultivating a civil opposition against the KMT's prolonged "political tutelage". Dissatisfied with the KMT's one-party rule, the CCP decided to co-opt these minor democratic forces to form a united-front framework and finally to overrule the KMT dictatorship. "Resistance, constitutionalism and democracy" became the main theme of wartime political campaign carried out by different parties including the CCP in the KMT-controlled areas.

In this sense, for women intellectuals who moved from Nanjing and Shanghai to Wuhan and later to Chongqing, the War enlarged the spaces where they could participate in the various political campaigns and manoeuvres for national resistance, engage with different political parties and groups, and therefore expand, integrate and circulate their independent political networks. Although some contacts were lost due to frequent travel and moving, but the majority of women intellectuals managed to integrate networks in Wuhan and then expanded their political connections during the constitutionalist movement in Chongqing. Through the fortnightly women's constitutionalist forums, these prominent women intellectuals circulated their ideas on resistance, constitutionalism and women's political rights. "Democracy" for them, was not conformist party rhetoric but a detailed political project through which women could be united and empowered. Communication across geo-political boundaries between women's networks in CCP-controlled areas and those in KMT-controlled areas was also enhanced during the constitutional and democratic movements in the 1940s.

My first two chapters therefore aim to demonstrate the integration, expansion and connection of women intellectuals' networks before and at the beginning of the War. Chapter 1 starts with women intellectuals' local networks established in Shanghai and Nanjing before the War, and finishes with the integration and expansion of these networks into the "New Life Movement" Women's Advisory Council directed by Song Meiling but joined by women activists of different political parties in 1938 Wuhan. Chapter 2 begins with the fall of Wuhan in October 1938, and tracks the migration of women intellectuals to Chongqing where they quickly reconstituted their political networks to support national resistance, fight

collaboration and promote constitutionalism.⁶⁵ These cross-party women's networks achieved nationwide connections during the constitutionalist movement; women intellectuals in the wartime capital Chongqing were able to exchange ideas and agenda with their peers in Yan'an, Kunming and Hong Kong. However, disagreements and divisions were also inevitable within women's cross-party networks due to the rapidly changing political climate in the early 1940s, while disconnections between the wartime capital and east China were also unavoidable due to the Japanese occupation of major cities such as Shanghai and Nanjing.

The spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement were not fixed; they transformed against the backdrop of the rapidly changing social and political conditions in wartime China. For instance, after the New Fourth Army Incident, political persecution against communists impacted on all left-wing women activists who used to cooperate with KMT women activists with the goal of achieving "resistance", "constitutionalism" and "democracy". After the left-wing forces had withdrawn from the PPC and the WAC in 1941, women intellectuals lost some of their most important cross-party political platforms to participate in national politics. However, while some official political connections were cut off, many personal ties and friendships were enhanced. The Incident did not terminate women intellectuals' cross-party communication. On the contrary, it marked a new round of political negotiation and identification through which women intellectuals repositioned themselves in the shifted social and political spaces. Another example is the outbreak of the Civil War and the KMT's persecution of both CCP and DL members in 1947. The spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement further shrank, while the Nationalist government was blamed for the continuing warfare as well as for the recession and the hyperinflation in the late 1940s. Despite confusion and antagonisms, the majority of women intellectuals gave up their neutral position and turned left to the CCP, with their networks gradually integrated into the CCP's united-front framework.

⁶⁵ *Xinyun funü zhidao weiyuanhui sanzhounian jinian tekan* [Special issue for the third anniversary of the Women's Advisory Council] (The Women's Advisory Committee, 1948), Nanjing Library Republican-era Collections.

Dislocations and displacements of women intellectuals' networks were not uncommon during the wartime period. Did women intellectuals continue their communication across party lines and political boundaries once the social, political and economic conditions changed through the War? And did they maintain the same style of networking and communication after the communist takeover in 1949? The second theme of the thesis therefore highlights both the continuities and discontinuities in women intellectuals' political networking through a series of political events, in particular, the New Fourth Army incident in 1941 and the communist takeover in 1949.

The third chapter of my thesis focuses on the dislocations and displacements of women intellectuals' political networks in 1941. After the New Fourth Army Incident, a number of women intellectuals associated with the CCP and the minor political parties became the target of the KMT's political purge. They were forced to leave the WAC or even to leave Chongqing for Guilin, Kunming and Hong Kong. For instance, Liu Qingyang and Han Youtong went to Hong Kong, while Shen Zijiu was first transferred to Hong Kong and then to Singapore and Sumatra where she stayed in political exile for more than 7 years. However, these departures and dislocations should not be interpreted as the complete loss of contact: Liu Qingyang and Han Youtong returned to Chongqing in 1942 and helped with the founding of the Women's Committee of Sino-Soviet Cultural Association (中苏文化协会 SSCA). And in the case of Shen Zijiu who stayed in Singapore until 1948, she still managed to contact Shi Liang in 1945 and eventually went to Xibaipo, the headquarters of the CCP, in 1948. New left-wing networks were established in Kunming, Hong Kong and Singapore by these "diaspora" intellectuals; while in Chongqing, personal networks and friendships among women intellectuals played an important role in protecting left-wing organisations and maintaining cross-party communication.

Nonetheless, the severe crisis of the United Front after the New Fourth Army Incident left little political space for the minor political parties and groups to play the role of mediator; the "centralist" or non-partisan women intellectuals were faced with significant personnel and structural changes in their networks after the Incident. Chapter 4 thus focuses on the development of the SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA to demonstrate how women

intellectuals explored the available political recourses and personal networks to maintain their political engagement and activities after the New Fourth Army Incident, and how they gradually enhanced left-wing political networks under the CWA while further identifying with the CCP.

These left-wing women's networks were maintained among women intellectuals from the CCP, the DL and the left-wing KMT as an open political workshop via the branches of the CWA and the DL in different cities during the following Civil War. Although these left-wing women intellectuals continued testing their political common grounds as well as boundaries during the Civil War, it was inevitable that the majority of them leaned to the CCP after the DL had been outlawed by the KMT in 1947. Chapter 6 therefore concentrates on the transformations of women intellectuals' political networks during the Civil War and after the communist takeover. Taking the experiences of Liu-Wang Liming, Li Wenyi, Shen Zijiu and Liu Qingyang as examples, this chapter highlights the relocation of women intellectuals' political networks in east China after the War, left-wing intellectuals' further identification with the CCP after 1947, and the final amalgamation of their diverse organisations, societies and networks into the All-China Women's Federation (中华全国妇女联合会 hereafter ACWF) after 1949.

These above chapters illustrate the emergence, development, relocation and transformation of the political networks among the most prominent women intellectuals, who always stayed in the cultural and political centres during the course of the War. Chapter 5 shifts the focus to the local level to examine women intellectuals' political networks in Kunming. With political engagement conducted in both vertical and horizontal directions, women's political networking in Kunming reflects different dynamics in terms of the style, the content and the audience of their communication. This chapter begins with the arrival of Li Wenyi in Kunming to establish a left-wing women's group. Struggling for institutional, political and financial support, Li Wenyi depended on local women's communities, organisations and student bodies for her network development. The political organisation and networking among local women intellectuals in Kunming showed different patterns compared with that at the national level in Chongqing.

Located on the very periphery of the areas of conflict during the War, Kunming was lagging behind in terms of women's mobilisation for national resistance. However, well-known as the "fortress of democracy" in the 1940s, Kunming was the home of many prestigious intellectuals who had moved there with their universities. Local women's networks, despite their different political affiliations, were deeply rooted in the intellectual and student societies at local schools and universities. Therefore women's organisations in Kunming not only maintained connections with central authorities and party headquarters in Chongqing, but also competed for the valuable political resources available on campus. Women's political agendas in Kunming did not always follow those in Chongqing although communication between local branches and their headquarters in Chongqing was evident through the entire war period. A local angle, in this light, helps reveal both the consistencies and variations in women's political engagement at different levels.

In this thesis, I also pay attention to the "gender aspect" of women intellectuals' political engagement and networking in order to reveal the complex social, political and gender roles played by women intellectuals as individuals during the wartime era. As Li Danke has revealed in her oral history of women in wartime Chongqing, women played different roles rather than the stereotyped "victim" during the War, but their wartime experience was nonetheless gendered.⁶⁶ Although women's political participation was justified in the context of resistance and their networks were intertwined with those of men within various wartime political institutions and parties, women intellectuals still had to endure prejudices and marginalisation due to their gender relations and identities. By observing the various roles and identities held by women intellectuals, I seek to demonstrate the historical dynamics of war, politics and gender in the 1930s and 1940s China. The "gender aspect" of wartime politics not only refers to the feminist agenda that united or alienated women as a political group during the War, but more important, it refers to the confusion, variation of and the contradictions between the roles played by women in public and those played by them in

⁶⁶ Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*.

private. And “the War” was a variable force, which justified and catalysed women’s political participation in some cases, but blocked or delayed the progress in others.

The wartime era witnessed the intertwined political relations and social connections between the occupiers, collaborators and the people in resistance, between central political headquarters and local societies and communities, between the major parties and the minor democratic forces. Women intellectuals’ political networking during the War, in this light, was not simply about becoming a “member” of any particular organisation or party, but about justifying and identifying with the various roles and positions they adopted within the wartime socio-political milieu. The educated women elites I am going to introduce in this thesis were political leaders, civil servants, partisans, undercover activists and even spies, but they were also mothers, wives, mistresses and widows during the War. Understanding the complex network of their social and political relations makes an important step towards reinterpreting the historical dynamics of war, politics and gender in 1930s and 1940s China.

Primary sources and materials

Most of the primary materials analysed in this thesis are from historical archives and library collections in Chongqing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Kunming and Beijing. The Chongqing Municipal Archives (CMA) holds important wartime-era documents pertaining to women’s organisations and activities in the Chongqing region. Since Chongqing was the wartime capital of China between 1937 and 1946, the archival collections provide abundant information on the political, economic and cultural institutions/organisations of the Nationalist government in wartime Chongqing, including documents filed by both national and local women’s organisations such as the WAC, the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee, the KMT Chongqing Municipal Women’s Movement Committee (国民党重庆市妇女运动委员会) and the SSCA. The CMA documents used in this thesis include: documents filed by the Women’s Committee of the Sino-Soviet Culture Association; documents filed by the KMT Chongqing Women’s Movement Committee and the KMT Chongqing Municipal Women’s Community; documents of orders, correspondences, reports,

and meeting minutes between women's organisations and the Chongqing municipal government; documents related to the financial issues faced by women's organisations in Chongqing (funding application and taxpaying documents etc.), filed by the Chongqing Bureau of Finance and the Chongqing Municipal Police; and documents related to other women's organisations and activities in Chongqing.

The Shanghai Municipal Archives and the Nanjing Municipal Archives hold considerable local and personal documents on women's societies, groups and communities in the region. Due to the wartime migration of women intellectuals between 1937 and 1946, documents collected in Shanghai and Nanjing provide valuable information on women intellectuals' political networking before their migration to the hinterland and after their return to Nanjing and Shanghai when the War finished. The personal documents of Xia Bengying collected in the Nanjing Municipal Archives, for instance, detail her political participation in different local and national women's organisations before, during and after the War of Resistance, and reflect both consistencies and changes in her political engagement with different political parties and institutions.

Archival holdings in the Yunnan Provincial Archives (YPA) are a complementary source of analysis to the CMA documents. This material provides insight for comparing women intellectuals' political engagement at the local level in Kunming and that at the national level in Chongqing. The YPA documents used in this thesis include 14 complete files (卷) filed by the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Movement Committee (国民党云南省妇女运动委员会), which consist of the correspondences between the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, the KMT Social Ministry, the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee, the KMT Central Organisation Department and other political institutions both in Kunming and in Chongqing; they also include surveys on the membership of various women's organisations in Yunnan in the 1940s, documents related to the recruitments and resignations in KMT women's organisations in Kunming, the annual and monthly financial budgets of the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee (1942, 1943 and 1944), filed complaints with regard to the insufficient financial support received by local women's organisations in Kunming, various public speeches organised for local women on topics such as "women and

Constitutionalism”, as well as other women’s activities and celebrations organised in Kunming in the 1940s.

Documents collected from the Beijing Municipal Archives (BMA) mainly show how the various women’s organisations, societies and networks were integrated into the All-China Women Federation after 1949, and how the style of communication of women intellectuals changed from free forums, discussions and debates to secret reports and self/mutual criticisms in the early 1950s. The BMA documents employed in this thesis include work summaries, correspondences, secret reports and orders related to the CWA, the North China Women Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) between 1949 and 1960, as well as documents related to the agendas of the All-China Women Federation and the united-front framework in Beijing in the early 1950s.

In addition, I also use more recently released historical materials and documents to complement original archival documents. The *Historical Documents of Women’s Movements in China—Volumes 1&2 on the Republican Government* (*Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan*) were released by the Second National Archives in 2011. These two volumes of historical documents are selected from archival files maintained by various departments and institutions of the Republican government. Together they offer detailed information on KMT policies, agendas, surveys, decision-making processes and internal communication related but not confined to the women’s movement between 1912 and 1949. The *Historical Materials of the CCP South Bureau* (*Nanfangju dangshi ziliao*), together with the local materials on history and humanities (*Difang wenshi ziliao*) also provide me with crucial background information on women’s organisations and activities in different regions and during different periods of the War. I have also explored popular newspapers and journals published in the late 1930s and 1940s such as *Shen Bao*, *Xinhua Ribao*, *Women’s Life* (*Funü Shenghuo*) and *Modern Women* (*Xiandai Funü*), as well as some less-studied local publications such as *Spring Colour* (*Chunse* 1937), *Haigang Weekly* (*Haigang Zhoubao* 1946) and *Youth Cinema* (*Qingchun Dianying* 1947).

Archival documents are of great value in revealing and re-examining the wartime history of China, but they are by no means the only source to understand history. David Lowenthal has reminded researchers that: “Nothing begins life in an archive, and few things remain there forever. Most holdings alternate between archival and non-archival locales and functions.”⁶⁷ Archival documents were selected, preserved and presented by archivists; thus biases, gaps and margins are inevitable while they “mirror the agencies they serve.”⁶⁸ Since women have been constantly marginalised in national history, it is not surprising that many of their activities and organisations were not documented in the textual files collected in archives. Because of the shortage of archival materials, interviews, biographies, auto-biographies, diaries and memoirs have also been used by historians to enrich their knowledge about historical events and to obtain in-depth understanding of historical themes.

Oral history is a valuable method to retrieve the marginalised memories and subjugated voice of Chinese women. This method has been used by western-trained Chinese historians such as Wang Zheng and Li Danke, who managed to combine first-hand materials gained through interviews with historical analysis from innovative perspectives.⁶⁹ The biggest advantage of oral history lies in the detailed and personalised memories which are often missing from official documents and materials, but like every research method, oral history has its own limits and problems. Subjectivity is one of the problems that impede the reliability of oral history. Like authors of auto-biographies, interviewees can overstate or understate their behaviours and feelings in the past, sometimes to echo the present ideologies, and sometimes just to glorify their personal experience or to gloss over their misconduct. As Roger D. Markwick puts it, “Human memory is notoriously unreliable and tends to be shaped by current perspectives on the past.”⁷⁰ Aware of both the value and the likely problems of

⁶⁷ David Lowenthal, “Archives, Heritage and History” in Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg eds., *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory* (USA: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 199.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 194.

⁶⁹ Please see Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*; Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*.

⁷⁰ Roger D. Markwick and Euridice Charon Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline in the Second World War* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5.

oral history, I decided not to conduct interviews in my research, for the following two reasons: First, the key women intellectuals in my thesis, who had been educated in the May Fourth era and become politically mature during the War, all passed away by the end of the last century. Second, the limited research time for my PhD project did not allow me to conduct a long-term fieldwork in China besides my archival research.

Although this thesis lacks oral materials gained directly from interviews, I have employed personal writings, letters and memoirs produced in different time periods in the last century. Some memoirs, diaries and letters of women intellectuals were published in newspapers and journals in the 1930s and 1940s, such as Shen Zijiu's memoir *I left Shanghai* (*Wo likai le Shanghai*) published in *Women's Life* in 1938; others were published as autobiographies more recently such as Li Wenyi's autobiography *The Memoir of Li Wenyi* published in 2004, Shi Liang's *The Way of My Life* (*Wo de shenghuo*) published in 1983 and Ding Ling's *The World of Monsters—the Memory of My Prison Life in Nanjing* (*Wangliang shijie—Nanjing qiuju huiyi*) published in 1987. To reveal the private spheres of women intellectuals' networks that are not often reflected in official archival documents, I also extract information from private printed matters such as pamphlets, handouts, invitation letters, meeting reports and work summaries of women's organisations in the wartime era. By comparing and analysing materials from a variety of sources, I will be able to examine the complex networks of social and political relations maintained among women intellectuals at national, local and individual levels.

Chapter 1

Since Japan's invasion of Manchuria and the January 28 Incident in Shanghai,⁷¹ the entire east China was threatened by Japan's growing military ambition and aggression. Despite the reluctance of the Nanjing government to immediately fight a war against Japan, Chinese people from all walks of life, especially intellectuals who were active in Shanghai, Nanjing and Beiping, gradually connected their social and political networks through the National Salvation Movement in order to save the nation from its deepening crisis. Women intellectuals such as Shen Zijiu, Cao Mengjun and Shi Liang also became prominent leaders and activists in this movement. Through publications, group meetings, casual dinners and house parties, women intellectuals in Shanghai and Nanjing developed and circulated their resistance networks when the War of Resistance was looming large in east China. After Shanghai and Nanjing had both fell to Japan, in order to continue their resistance, most of these prominent women leaders and intellectuals moved to Wuhan. And during the "heroic defence" of Wuhan in 1938,⁷² they consolidated, merged and institutionalised their networks and reinforced their resistance ideas and organisations under the anti-Japanese United Front forged by the KMT, the CCP and minor political parties and groups.

Networking across Shanghai, Nanjing and Wuhan in the face of war, Chinese women intellectuals were not only responding to the call for resistance, but also seeking their political roles and contesting their political ideas through various campaigns and movements

⁷¹ Known as the Shanghai Incident, on 28th January 1932, Japanese marines invaded Shanghai and encountered resistance of the 19th Route Army of the KMT. The military conflicts lasted from 28 January to 3 March. On 5 May 1932, the Songhu Truce Agreement was signed after negotiation and mediation between China, Japan, the UK, the US, France and other countries. Please see Christian Herriot, "Beyond Glory: Civilians, Combatants, and Society during the Battle of Shanghai", *War & Society*, 31 (2012): 106-135.

⁷² MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938*, 54.

to achieve social and political reforms. They launched their careers in the early 1930s and developed their social and political relations in the urban spaces of Shanghai, Nanjing and Beijing before the War. The mass mobilisation for “national resistance” and the wartime migration further constructed rather than destructed the connections between their local networks, a nationwide women’s organisation, the “New Life Movement” Women’s Advisory Council (WAC) was therefore established by those émigré women elites and intellectuals in Wuhan.

Focusing on the sophisticated social linkages and political affiliations women intellectuals established among each other and within different political parties, factions and groups in the urban sites of east China, this chapter reveals the development, expansion and integration of women intellectuals’ political networks at the first stage of the War. Instead of overstressing the roles played by either the KMT or the CCP in organising and mobilising women for resistance during the War, I emphasise Chinese women intellectuals’ political initiatives and activism in communicating across minor political parties and groups to develop their independent organisations. The National Salvation Associations (NSA) in particular, provided them with an important platform for their political participation during the War. Women’s NSA networks developed by Shen Zijiu, Cao Mengjun and Shi Liang further reinforced women intellectuals’ political communication across party lines and geo-political boundaries during the wartime period.

The anti-Japanese United Front forged between the KMT and its long-time rival the CCP in 1937 by all means enlarged the political space for women intellectuals’ political participation and networking during the War. But since the very beginning, it was more of an agreed-upon political attitude than a set of shared policies and actions among the different parties and groups in wartime China. Women intellectuals who migrated to Wuhan in 1938 did not encounter an abrupt ideological shift from their different political and social concerns to a heroic nationalism. Rather, they experienced the “national resistance” as a number of complex processes of and spaces for political creation and identification, in which they were both producers, consumers and sometimes victims of the resistance ideology. On this point,

this chapter begins with the circulation of resistance ideas and networks among women intellectuals when the war against Japan was looming large in east China.

Shen Zijiu and the “Women’s Life” reading group in Shanghai

The 1930s saw the urban spaces of Shanghai in economic, cultural and political domination of east China. As Coble has explained, because of the foreign settlements and sectors in this city, Shanghai was, to a large extent, protected from the KMT’s forces and therefore accommodated different social and political groups in search of organisation for national salvation.⁷³ Rich in financial resources as well as in political life, Shanghai, the so-called “Paris of the East”, was also the hub of China’s literary societies and printing industries, which attracted the intelligent minds of China to develop their careers.⁷⁴ There are many stories to tell about Shanghai, in particular during the period of the 1930s when the city was the sphere of vibrant cultural and media productivities, and also the place that took the brunt of Japanese aggression.⁷⁵ However, in this chapter, the story of Shanghai is all about a group of educated women elites in the face of the “national crisis”, who developed a network of social and political relations in Shanghai, and who were galvanised into action for the resistance of Japan’s imperialist invasion.

This network firstly emerged and developed through the reading groups established by women in town. Shen Zijiu was one of the prominent women leaders who developed and connected these women’s reading groups in pre-war Shanghai. With a degree in fine art from Japan, Shen Zijiu returned to China in 1926. She became a teacher first in Hangzhou High School, and then in Songjiang Girls’ Normal School of Jiangsu Province, teaching art and

⁷³ Coble, “The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai”, 121.

⁷⁴ For more information on the “literary societies” in Shanghai, please see Hockx, *Questions of Style*, 86.

⁷⁵ Please see Alexander Townsend Des Forges, *Mediasphere Shanghai: The Aesthetics of Cultural Production* (USA: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

home economics.⁷⁶ Like many women intellectuals of her age who had experienced the May Fourth movement in 1919 and had been educated abroad, Shen supported women's independence in society and understood that the nation had been thrown into crisis by the events in Manchuria. In Hangzhou and Songjiang, Shen inspired many of her female students who shared her ambitions and later followed in her footsteps. Ji Hong, Peng Zigang and Hu Ziyang were all Shen's students who later assisted her with her journal *Women's Life* in Shanghai and became prominent women activists during the War.

According to her students, Shen Ziji was more than just a teacher who taught girls how to manage their houses and beautify themselves. Resisting the patriarchal value of "good wife and wise mother" (贤妻良母), which had been enhanced through the "New Life Movement" in the 1930s, Shen insisted that her students meet regularly in school reading groups and discuss the active roles women could play in order to tackle the national crisis.⁷⁷ It was in those reading groups on campus that young educated women such as Shen Ziji, Hu Ziyang and Ji Hong established their early connections and grew their ambition to achieve something special in life beyond managing their houses.

Shanghai after the January 28 Incident was no longer a paradise for entertainment, leisure and selfish pleasures. Although the commercials in *Shen Bao* (申报), the most influential newspaper in Shanghai, still tried to advertise the luxurious life style of the city even after Manchuria had fallen to Japan, newspapers in Shanghai, as important media and spaces for public communication, were being transformed in the shadow of the War. In December 1932,

⁷⁶ Ji Hong, "Ziji laoshi yu Funü Shenghuo", in Dong Bian ed., *Nijie wenhua zhanshi Shen Ziji* [Shen Ziji—a Female Warrior of Culture] (Zhongguo funü Press, 1991), 41; Huang Jingyun, "Fengyun sui yue—Shen Ziji yu Funü Shenghuo" [Life as Wind and Cloud—Shen Ziji and *Women's Life*], *Xinguan* [New Observation] 18 (1983): 52. For more information about women teaching "home economics", please refer to Helen M. Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁷⁷ Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy*, 185-188. For more information on the origin and social construction of the idea "good wife and wise mother" in Asia, please refer to Kaku Sechiyama, *Patriarchy in East Asia: a Comparative Sociology of Gender* (Brill, Netherlands, 2013), 65-93; Prasenjit Duara, *The Global and Regional in China's Nation-Formation* (UK, USA and Canada: Routledge, 2008), 117-125.

Shi Liangcai, the chief manager of *Shen Bao* decided to revamp *Free Talk* (自由谈), the supplement of *Shen Bao*, in order to discuss and circulate public opinions on the deepening national crisis. *Free Talk* quickly turned into an open forum amongst the most critical minds in Shanghai, where many famous intellectuals in town including Lu Xun and Mao Dun contributed their articles and made comments on current affairs.⁷⁸

Shen Zijiū, an independent female teacher who had a deep concern for the national's crisis, was also attracted to this forum. In early 1934, encouraged by the responses and supports from not only male, but also increasingly female readers, Shi Liangcai decided to change the Sunday edition of *Free Talk* to a women's forum *Women's Garden* (妇女园地)—a weekly supplement speaking directly to the women readers of *Shen Bao*. Shen Zijiū was then employed by Shi as the chief editor of this new supplement. On 21 February, *Women's Garden* launched its first issue, and soon it became a platform for Shanghai women to establish their own voice and ideas.⁷⁹

Becoming an editor was an important step for Shen Zijiū to extend her personal network within the cultural and political circles of pre-war Shanghai. Through publications, Shen became familiar with female writers and women intellectuals from different political backgrounds. Her friendships and working relations among these women intellectuals further laid a solid foundation for the development of women's resistance networks in Shanghai. For example, the circulation of the *Women's Garden* helped Shen Zijiū quickly extend her network to include women intellectuals from the underground CCP in Shanghai. One evening in late February of 1934—not long after the first issue of *Women's Garden* had been published—a young woman found Shen Zijiū's residence and introduced herself to Shen. Described by Shen as a “slim and elegant young lady in her half-old dark brown *qipao* (旗袍) dress,”⁸⁰ Du Junhui, a communist activist who had joined the communist party in 1928, came to offer her assistance. Without explaining to Shen her political views, Du introduced herself with a 100,000-word essay entitled “A Speech on Women's Issue”, which was soon

⁷⁸ *Shen Bao*, copies from 1932 to 1934, Shanghai Library Collections.

⁷⁹ Huang, “Fengyun suiyue”, 52-53.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 54.

published in *Women's Garden* as a serial. After becoming a regular contributor, Du Junhui also introduced Luo Qiong, another pro-communist activist to Shen Zijiu. Both Du and Luo were henceforth absorbed into the editing team of *Women's Garden*.⁸¹

However, the expansion of Shen Zijiu's personal and professional network through the publication of *Shen Bao* soon encountered a setback. Just when Shen Zijiu's *Women's Garden* started to develop, on 13 November 1934, the chief manager of *Shen Bao* Shi Liangcai was assassinated by KMT secret agents for his criticism of Chiang Kai-shek's non-resistance policy and for his sympathy with the resistance forces in town, including the CCP.⁸² As a consequence, the supplement *Women's Garden* was terminated. Seeing that *Shen Bao* could no longer support women's resistance ideas and networks, Shen Zijiu, Du Junhui and Luo Xiong decided to establish an independent women's journal. On 1 July 1935, the advertisement for the inaugural issue of *Women's Life* was posted in *Shen Bao*. The first issue of *Women's Life* received articles contributed by many famous names in Shanghai's literary and art circles, including, among others, writers Mao Dun and Bai Wei and film director Shen Xilin.⁸³

As the following sections demonstrate, *Women's Life* grew to be one of the most important women's journals in Shanghai in the 1930s. By means of the communication between editors, contributors and readers, *Women's Life* also helped establish a literary and political society among educated women elites in pre-war Shanghai, which not only helped with the circulation of their resistance ideas, but also strengthened their social linkages and political networks. The successful transition from *Women's Garden* to the independent *Women's Life*, to a great extent, shows that women intellectuals in Shanghai had already achieved a network of socio-political relations and information to protect, advertise and circulate their publications under the political pressure from the "non-resistance" government. Shen Zijiu

⁸¹ Ibid, 55.

⁸² Shen Zui and Shen Meijuan, *Wo zhe sanshi nian* [My Thirty Years] (Hunan Renmin Press, 1983); "Baoye juzi bei ansha" [The Newspaper Tycoon Was Assassinated], *Guangming ribao*, November 13, 2004.

⁸³ *Shen Bao*, 1 July, 1935, 17.

once mentioned how the broad connections held by the *Women's Life* society helped with the journal's publications in Shanghai:

In order to make the publication of *Women's Life* escape the strict KMT censorship, we sent some people to deal with KMT officials so that they would only pick up several small problems but allow the whole article to be published. Also we managed to gain some important contacts with Du Yuesheng's Green Gang,⁸⁴ and managed to build a direct connection with a Mrs He, one of the heads in the Red Gang. Because of our wide social connections, we could always solve problems by ourselves.⁸⁵

Apart from women intellectuals' reading and publishing societies, the early 1930s Shanghai also saw the emergence of a variety of women's career groups and "taitai" clubs,⁸⁶ whose memberships overlapping with each other. It was common at the time for women members of one group to participate in activities organised by other groups. Some women's groups and organisations eventually merged together in order to increase their membership numbers or to create a more effective leadership. In her memoir, Hu Xiaqing mentioned a women's organisation in Shanghai called the Association for Housewives, which, despite the misleading name probably chosen randomly, attracted many prominent women intellectuals and career women in town such as Shen Zijiu, Luo Qiong, Luo Shuzhang and Ding Huihan.⁸⁷ Another "housewife society", the Bee Club, merged with the Shanghai Young Women's Club at the end of 1936, whose members included actresses Chen Bo'er, Yu Liqun (who married Guo Moruo in 1939) and Lan Ping (Jiang Qing, who married Mao Zedong in 1938), the

⁸⁴ The Green Gang (*Qingbang* 青帮) and the Red Gang (*Hongbang* 洪帮) have a long history that can be traced back to the early Qing Dynasty. The Red Gang was founded earlier than the Green Gang, originally as a secret society created to revolt against the Qing government. Please refer to Brian G. Martin, *The Shanghai Green Gang: Politics and Organized Crime, 1919-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

⁸⁵ Shen Zijiu, "Huiyi Funü Yuandi yu Funü Shenghuo" [Memories about *Women's Garden* and *Women's Life*], (undated), SMA, C31-6-258, 16.

⁸⁶ Taitai (太太) refers to the privileged and upper-class wives.

⁸⁷ The extract from Hu Xiaqing's memoir (undated), Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA), C31-6-258, 88-92.

well-known female writer Bai Wei and communist activists Du Junhui, Zhu Wenyang and Wang Ruqi (cousin of the famous KMT official and democratic intellectual Wang Kunlun).⁸⁸

By the time of the 13 August Shanghai Incident,⁸⁹ there were over twenty women's organisations in Shanghai.⁹⁰ Their intertwined and complicated memberships already indicate the growing complex network of social and political relations among women intellectuals in Shanghai. Involved in these local women's organisations were not only Shanghai's famous gangs, but also the various political parties and factions. For instance, the Chinese Women's Community (中华妇女互助会), although sponsored by a group of rich wives of high-ranking KMT officials, did not become a club exclusively for rich KMT ladies thus distanced itself from women intellectuals and activists of other political backgrounds. According to the memoir of one member named Zhu Wenyang, not only the C.C. Clique of KMT established contacts in the Chinese Women's Community, but CCP members and non-partisans also grew their networks within the organisation. Communists Yuchi Ying and Zhu Wenyang, resistance activists Ding Huihan, Han Xuezhong and Zhu Libo all made their seats in the standing committee;⁹¹ on board were also some local social figures such as female lawyer Jiang Zhaoping and painter Zhang Manjun, daughter of the famous Shanghai painter Zhang Xiaolou.⁹²

Despite the multiple political affiliations held by its members, the Chinese Women's Community was not established as an organ of any political party or group. When Tian

⁸⁸ "Qingnian funü julebu jianjie" [A Brief Introduction of the Shanghai Young Women's Club], (undated), SMA, C31-6-258, 25-33.

⁸⁹ On 13 August 1937, the Japanese troop invaded Shanghai, hence began the Battle for Shanghai of three-month resistance. On 12 November 1937, Shanghai fell to Japan. Please refer to Frederic Wakeman, *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime 1937-1941* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6.

⁹⁰ Zhu Wenyang, "Zhonghua funü huzhuhui chenglidahui jilue" [The Short Summary on the Launching Conference of the Chinese Women's Community], October 1937, SMA, C31-6-260, 421.

⁹¹ Ding Huihan, Han Xuezhong and Zhu Libo also joined the National Salvation Association.

⁹² "Zhonghua funü huzhuhui jianshi" [A Short History of the Chinese Women's Community], August 1937, SMA, C31-6-260, 416-418; Zhu, "Zhonghua fun ü huzhuhui chenglidahui jilue", SMA, C31-6-260, 421-422.

Shujun, the wife of the Shanghai Garrison Commander initiated the Community, she did not expect that it would be soon dominated by both communists and women members of the C.C. Clique. As a matter of fact, Tian was hoping this women's organisation to be the solution to her endangered marriage. Being one of the eight wives married to the Shanghai Garrison commander, Tian's position at home was consistently threatened by the concubines of her husband. In order to gain more respect in her family household as well as to lift herself up in wider social and political arenas, Tian decided to organise and sponsor a local women's community in Shanghai.⁹³ Therefore, for Tian Shujun, initiating the Chinese Women's Community in pre-war Shanghai was more for the purpose of empowering herself in the household than realising any political goal in the name of national resistance.

In sum, the rapid development of local women's societies, groups and organisations in pre-war Shanghai, despite their different initial purposes, indicates the already complex network of social and political relations maintained by Chinese women intellectuals before the War. As demonstrated above, women intellectuals—may they be KMT wives, C.C. Clique members, democratic intellectuals or undercover communists—were ready to expand and connect their networks in order to empower themselves both socially and politically on the edge of the War of Resistance. Despite their diverse agendas and different patrons, these local women's societies, groups and organisations provided the later women's National Salvation Movement with crucial social and political resources. And only 300 kilometres from Shanghai, Nanjing, the capital of the KMT government, marked a second hub of women intellectuals' networks cross different political parties and social groups.

Cao Mengjun and the "New Women" reading group in Nanjing

Women intellectuals' political networks in Nanjing also originated from local reading groups that concerned the deepening national crisis and current political affairs. In the autumn of 1933, the KMT legislator and democratic intellectual Wang Kunlun, his sister

⁹³ "Tian Shujun qiren" [About Tian Shujun], (undated), SMA, C31-6-260, 424.

Wang Feng and his girlfriend Cao Mengjun, among a few other intellectuals in Nanjing secretly founded a reading group to learn Marxism and to analyse the current national and international affairs. In order to develop a women's own reading group, Cao Mengjun and Wang Feng invited Tan Tiwu, a female civil servant working at the Ministry of the Interior, and female journalists Ji Hong, Hu Jibang and Tan Dexian to join their group.⁹⁴ Some of these women intellectuals had known each other at university, while others had been working together under the WAC in Nanjing. Based on the interconnected friendships, relationships and kinships of their members, the local women's reading groups in Nanjing, as those in Shanghai, were not directly supported by any political party in the early 1930s.

Cao Mengjun in Nanjing, like Shen Ziji in Shanghai, became the key person of local women intellectuals' networks. With gentle eyes, thin lips and a slim figure—"a true beauty" in Shen Ziji's words, Cao Mengjun did not see the goal of life was to find a rich husband like many beautiful Chinese women in the 1930s would believe.⁹⁵ Instead, she impressed her friends and colleagues with her strong character and full passion for her career. In her friend Tan Dexian's eyes, Cao Mengjun was born to be a women's leader:

She [Cao Mengjun] is an advocate of education for women's independence and strong character [...] She would never let love or relationship hamper her career. When she is working, she devotes full effort no matter the task is big or small. And within a group, she is always the one who has people's attention. She speaks fast and works fast; she handles everything efficiently and prudently. She has the same incredible passion for learning as for working!⁹⁶

With her "incredible passion for work", Cao Mengjun soon became the leader of women intellectuals' reading group in Nanjing. She planned to develop this reading group to be a women's society promoting national salvation and resistance. However, compared with that in Shanghai, the political space for women intellectuals' organisation and networking was

⁹⁴ Hui Nian, "Jieshao liwei Tan Tiwu nüshi" [About Tan Tiwu, a Member of the Legislative Committee], *Modern Women* Vol. 9 Issue 5 (1947): 9-10.

⁹⁵ Tan DeXian, "Cao Mengjun yinxiangji" [My Impression of Cao Mengjun], *Women's Life* Vol. 3, Issue 1 (1936): 46.

⁹⁶ Tan, "Cao Mengjun yinxiangji", 47.

more limited in Nanjing. Women's political activities in Nanjing were strictly controlled by the KMT Nanjing Municipal Women's Community (南京市妇女会) under the jurisdiction of the KMT Central Mass Movement Directory Committee. KMT women's leader Tang Guozhen, who headed the Community, not only tried to supervise and contain other women's organisations in the city, but also intervened in women's activities organised outside the KMT.

Dissatisfied with the performance of the Nanjing Municipal Women's Community, Cao Mengjun and her friends in the reading group decided to challenge its authority and force it to reform for the purpose of resistance and national salvation. The reading group organised a public election campaign among women in Nanjing, hoping to vote against the current leadership of the KMT Nanjing Municipal Women's Community. Unfortunately the election was sabotaged by Tang Guozhen, who brought a number of school pupils to vote against Cao Mengjun. In view of the difficulty of replacing Tang Guozhen by public election, Cao Mengjun decided to establish an independent women's organisation in Nanjing to promote her own agendas. On 2 September 1934, the Nanjing Women's Association for Cultural Promotion (南京妇女文化促进会 hereafter WACP) was established and its office was set up at No. 80 Dashugen by the beautiful Xuanwu Lake.

Competitions and divisions between official KMT women's groups and local women intellectuals' resistance societies were often interpreted in CCP historiographies as the "contradiction" between those power-craving KMT stalwarts, such as Tang Guozhen, and those so-called "progressive women" (进步妇女), such as Cao Mengjun.⁹⁷ While Cao Mengjun, identified by the post-war CCP regime as an undercover communist, seemed to fit the profile of a "progressive" female activist who fought against evil KMT women leaders. However, overstressing women's intellectuals' political affiliation with either the ruling KMT or the underground CCP would lead to partial understanding of their intertwined political networks. As Ma Yuxin's research shows, both the KMT and the CCP saw rapid

⁹⁷ Such as the analysis made in *Jiangsu fun ü yundongshi 1919-1949* [*The History of Women's Movement in Jiangsu 1919-1949*] (Zhongguo fun ü Press, 1995), 137.

increase in their female members during the National Revolution period (1924-1927).⁹⁸ Gilmartin also points out that during this period, women activists from the KMT and those from the CCP formed both working relationships and friendships under the leadership of the Central Women's Department.⁹⁹

Although Cao Mengjun joined the CCP in 1925 when she was enrolled in Peking University, her social and political relations were never confined to the CCP. In Nanjing, Cao was working for the Ministry of Industry, while her close friend and previous schoolmate from Peking University, Tan Tiwu, was also a KMT civil servant working for the Ministry of the Interior.¹⁰⁰ Cao's relationship with the KMT legislator Wang Kunlun further helped with her network development across different political parties and groups in Nanjing.¹⁰¹ The couple made friends with many politicians and social figures in the capital city such as the famous ex-warlord General Feng Yuxiang and his wife Li Dequan. It would be unthinkable for Cao to challenge Tang Guozhen's leadership at the Nanjing Municipal Women's Community if she did not hold broad personal and political networks in Nanjing. And the fact that the WACP was immediately and successfully registered with the KMT Nanjing Municipal Social Bureau further indicates Cao's strong connections within the KMT, despite her previous political status as a communist member during the National Revolution.

Not long after its establishment, the WACP attracted more than a hundred women intellectuals from different professions and political backgrounds. Political and feminist agendas were combined to guide their regular study and discussions. They got together for the purpose of learning national affairs, researching women's issues and reforming women's lives. And through organising the WACP, Cao Mengjun, Wang Feng, Tan Tiwu, Ji Hong and Hu Jibang gradually grew to be active women leaders in Nanjing.¹⁰² Like in Shanghai where

⁹⁸ Ma, *Women Journalists and Feminism in China 1898-1937*, 205.

⁹⁹ Gilmartin, *Engendering China*, 195-225.

¹⁰⁰ Li Xiangdong, "Ding Ling, Gu Jiegang yanzhongde Tan Tiwu" [Tan Tiwu in the Eyes of Ding Ling and Gu Jiegang], *Book Town Editorial* 03 (2010): 61-63.

¹⁰¹ Wang Zhaozhu, *Wang Kunlun* (Huashan Wenyi Press, 1997), 122.

¹⁰² Jiangsu Women's Federation ed., *Jiangsu fun ü yundongshi 1919-1949* [*The History of Women's Movement in Jiangsu 1919-1949*] (Zhongguo fun ü Press, 1995), 137.

Shen Zijiu expanded her social and political network by publishing *Women's Life*, in Nanjing. Cao Mengjun also sought to enhance the WACP's influence and network through publishing. *New Women* (新妇女), as the weekly supplement of the popular local newspaper *Xinmin Bao* (新民报), was then launched as the organ of the WACP. In 1935 a series of articles were published in *New Women* to challenge the traditional value of "good wife and wise mother" and to increase women's knowledge about the deepening national crisis.¹⁰³ At the one year anniversary meeting of the WACP, Cao Mengjun made it clear that staying at home as a good wife and wise mother was not what women should do in the face of national crisis:

In the face of national crisis, we need every citizen's effort to save the nation. However there are still stubborn thoughts stopping us from our duties and forcing us back home to become good mothers and wives—don't they [the ideas of women going home] sound ridiculous at this moment? For the future of the women's movement, we women must not slow down; and for our equal positions we must conquer the difficulties we meet.¹⁰⁴

It is important to note that in her speech, Cao Mengjun emphasised both the goal of national salvation and the importance of a women's movement. Instead of echoing either the CCP or the KMT's propaganda on women's emancipation, which proved to be variable according to the party's interests,¹⁰⁵ Cao urged women to liberate themselves first in order to shoulder their equal responsibilities for the nation's future. The development of local women's organisations in Shanghai and Nanjing shows that women's political activism was not in decline under the shadow of the War when "feminist discourses and topics" were largely replaced by resistance slogans. Their political networks were not limited to any particular political party line, nor were they exclusively based upon feminist agenda. Through mobilising women for national salvation, women intellectuals in Shanghai and Nanjing tried to combine their feminist ideas with their political goals, while they achieved a broad network of social and political relations in the urban sites of east China. Their local networks,

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Cao Mengjun, "1935 nian de huigu" [The Summary of the Year 1935], *Xinmin Bao*, 1 January, 1936.

¹⁰⁵ Please see Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution*.

were soon to be connected during the National Salvation Movement when the war clouds loomed large.

“Tale of Two Cities”

It did not take long for women intellectuals in Nanjing to intensify and enhance communication with those in Shanghai. Coble has argued that: “Personal network of connections was as critical to jump-starting the salvationist campaign as enlisting formal organisation.”¹⁰⁶ The political organisation and network development among women intellectuals before the War were also, to a large extent, based on personal ties. Like many KMT higher officials working in Nanjing, Wang Kunlun also had a residence in Shanghai, where he became familiar with women elites such as Shen Zijiu and Hu Ziyang.¹⁰⁷ It is likely that in the early 1930s, through Wang Kunlun, his sister Wang Feng and girlfriend Cao Mengjun had already built contacts with prominent women intellectuals in Shanghai. Teacher-student relations and alumni networks also enhanced women intellectuals’ communication between different cities. In the summer of 1935, Ji Hong, the female journalist in Nanjing, decided to move to Shanghai to assist Shen Zijiu, her previous teacher at Songjiang Girls’ School. In Shanghai, Ji Hong assisted Shen Zijiu with editing the journal *Women’s Life* and became an active member of Shen Zijiu’s reading group.¹⁰⁸ Based on this personal network of kinships, friendships and working relationships, connections were gradually forged across women’s networks in the two cities, and women intellectuals of different political backgrounds started to synchronise their actions for national salvation.

In August 1935, Wang Kunlun, Cao Mengjun and members of their reading group were invited by the Culture Working Committee (文化工作委员会) of the CCP to discuss the CCP’s call for “stopping domestic conflicts and uniting against Japan”, a call that created the

¹⁰⁶ Coble, “The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai”, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Wang, *Wang Kunlun*, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Huang, “Fengyun suiyue”, 56.

primary prerequisite for the actual establishment of an anti-Japanese national United Front.¹⁰⁹ In the name of a “family get-together to taste peaches” among Wang Kunlun’s families and friends, a private and exclusive meeting was organised at the Wanfang House by the Taihu Lake of Wuxi city. This meeting provided the prominent women leaders in Shanghai and Nanjing with a great opportunity to meet each other in person. Cao Mengjun, Wang Feng and Hu Jibang from Nanjing, Shen Zijiu and Chen Bo’er from Shanghai all joined the discussion. They reported on the achievements made by women’s reading groups in Nanjing and Shanghai, and proposed to tighten the links between the two cities under an anti-Japanese national United Front. Sharing concerns for the deepening national crisis in east China, these women leaders came up with the idea of establishing Women’s National Salvation Associations both in Nanjing and in Shanghai.¹¹⁰

On 30 November 1935, the WACP and the *New Women* reading group organised a public forum in Nanjing to discuss urgent national affairs. The forum attracted about four hundred women representatives from different political groups and resulted in the founding of the Nanjing Women’s National Salvation Association (南京妇女界救国会).¹¹¹ Soon after women in Nanjing had established their own organisation for national salvation, Cao Mengjun and Hu Jibang travelled to Shanghai to meet with Shen Zijiu, Shi Liang, Du Junhui and Hu Ziyang, the leading members of the *Women’s Life* reading group, who then formed a

¹⁰⁹ Known in the CCP’s party history as “1st August Announcement”, which proposes an anti-Japanese united front and political cooperation between the CCP, the KMT, minor political parties and groups and non-partisan patriotic intellectuals. For more information, please refer to Gerry Groot, *Managing Transitions: the Chinese communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism, and Hegemony* (UK: Routledge, 2004); Kui-Kwong Shum, *The Chinese communists' Road to Power : the Anti-Japanese National United Front, 1935-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) and Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends : the United Front in Chinese communist History* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1967).

¹¹⁰ *Jiangsu fun üyundongshi 1919-1949*, 139.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

preparatory committee at end of 1935 to prepare for the establishment of the Shanghai Women's National Salvation Association (上海妇女界救国会).¹¹²

The urban spaces of Shanghai lent themselves to the development of the NSA networks among women intellectuals. The same social stratum these educated women elites belonged to and the similar life interests they shared were essential to their networking for national salvation and resistance, regardless of the difference in their political backgrounds and beliefs. Women intellectuals active in 1930s Shanghai and Nanjing, such as Shen Zijiu, Cao Mengjun and Shi Liang, were all socially well-connected and financially well-off. They regularly organised their activities at the most expensive places in the city. Casual meetings at home and dinners outside provided them with opportunities to meet other women activists and social elites. The Shanghai Godly Vegetarian Restaurant located on Huanghe Road became one of their regular places where they met to exchange ideas and make new friends. Apart from meetings at restaurants and cafés, they often hosted events at Ding Huihan's house on Xiafei Road (Avenue Joffre, today's Middle Huaihai Road) in the French Concession to avoid suspicion of conducting communist activities.¹¹³

Although the urban spaces played an important role in women intellectuals' political engagement and networking, they were not boundless for women's political activities in the 1930s. As Shi Liang remembered, the preparatory committee chose the Godly Vegetarian Restaurant in Shanghai as their meeting venue because of personal ties—an old friend was working there and the prices were reasonable. However the choice was also made because they did not have many other options—no native place (会馆) was willing to provide them with a venue for their meetings.¹¹⁴ Shi Liang did not explain why the ubiquitous native places in Shanghai all had refused to host them, but it is likely that most native places in 1930s Shanghai, despite their support to the National Salvation Movement, still held negative

¹¹² Ding Weiping, "Guotongqu funü jiuguohui he kangri jiuwang yundong" [Women's Salvation Association and the National Resistance Movement in the KMT-controlled Areas], *Jilin University Journal of Social Science* 06 (1993): 68.

¹¹³ The extract is from Hu Xiaqing's memoir, SMA, C31-6-258, 88-92.

¹¹⁴ Shi Liang, *Shi Liang zishu* [*Shi Liang's Auto-Biography*] (Zhongguo wenshi Press, 1987), 22-23.

attitudes toward women's political activities in public. Although most native places started accepting women in the 1920s and 1930s, there were still few women members at the time.¹¹⁵ Hence, the committee members had organised their preparatory meetings either at Godly or at some member's home, until on 20 December 1935, they officially established the Shanghai Women's National Salvation Association and set up an office at the Young Men's Christian Association on Sichuan Road.¹¹⁶

Nonetheless, by the end of 1935, women's salvation networks had already spread across the major cities in east China. Cao Mengjun, Tan Tiwu and Ji Hong from Nanjing, Shen Ziji, Shi Liang, Du Junhui, Luo Qiong and Luo Shuzhang from Shanghai and Liu Qingyang from Beiping further connected their local networks through the National Salvation Movement and declared their political goals:

1. To firmly maintain the integrity of Chinese territory and sovereignty;
2. To denounce secret foreign affairs and to deny any pacts or agreements that would harm the integrity of Chinese territory and sovereignty;
3. To denounce any executive organisations controlled by foreigners inside of China;
4. To centralise military forces and financial means to resist the enemies, to take down puppet authorities in north-east China and to regain the lost territory in the Northeast;
5. To harshly punish traitors;
6. To claim the right to freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of association;
7. To request the immediate release of patriotic students in Beiping and punishment upon the military police who perpetrated the arrests and violence;
8. To mobilise all women of the nation to organise together and to implement our propositions for national salvation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Bryna Goodman, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 308.

¹¹⁶ The extract from Hu Xiaqing's memoir, SMA, C31-6-258, 88-92.

¹¹⁷ "Shanghai funü jiuguo lianhehui xuanyan, 21-12-1935" [The Statement of the Shanghai

The above statement indicates that Chinese women intellectuals had established their own leadership for national resistance and understood their duties towards the country before the War. Following the establishment of the Women's Salvation Associations in Nanjing and Shanghai, a national leadership of the All-China National Salvation Association (全国各界救国联合会 here after NSA) was finalised on 31 May 1936 to promote the National Salvation Movement nationwide. Women leaders Song Qingling, He Xiangning, Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun and Liu Qingyang obtained positions in the 15-people standing committee of the NSA.¹¹⁸ Women intellectuals' political leadership in the National Salvation Movement demonstrates the continuity in their political activism and networking since the May Fourth era. Without the interconnected and outreaching networks they had built before the War, it would be difficult for them to participate in the National Salvation Movement not only as activists, but also as leaders and organisers.

From the outset, the NSA acted as a loose political framework which opened its door to almost every patriotic Chinese citizen regardless of their political alignments and beliefs. It is as Zhang Zhiyi described in 1939: "Apart from the majority being non-partisans, members of the KMT, the CCP, the National Socialist Party, the National Revolutionary League and the Third Party all joined the NSA."¹¹⁹ For women intellectuals, the multi-party political framework of the NSA provided them with various paths and choices to participate in national salvation and resistance in the late 1930s. Given its inclusive framework and indigenous political views, and given its genuine purpose for and concrete practice of saving the Chinese nation in the face of the Japanese aggression, the NSA appealed to women intellectuals as an alternative political choice outside of the KMT and the CCP.¹²⁰ And women intellectuals' political networks also helped with the establishment and expansion of

Women's National Salvation Association], 1936, SMA, C31-6-258, 58-59.

¹¹⁸ Zhang Junmin, *Zhongguo minzhu dangpai shi* [*The History of Chinese Democratic Parties*] (Heilongjiang Renmin Press, 2006), 140.

¹¹⁹ Zhang Zhiyi, *Kangzhan zhongde zhengdang he paibie* [*The Parties and Factions during the War of Resistance*] (Dushu shenghuo Press, 1939), 107.

¹²⁰ Zhang Naiqi, "Wo he jiuguohui" [I and the National Salvation Association], the volume on "National Salvation Association" in *Zhonghuaminguo shi ziliao congkao* [*The Collection of Historical Materials on the Republican China*] (Zhongguo shehui kexue Press, 1981), 34.

the NSA in east China. By 1937, women intellectuals in east China had grown to be an important resistance force with multiple political affiliations across the highly inclusive NSA framework.

An uneasy road toward national resistance

Although modern Chinese feminist ideas developed in the context of strengthening and modernising the nation in the late nineteenth century, feminism and nationalism were not always compatible in China's long twentieth century, especially when national crisis called for women's sacrifice of their own interest. The National Salvation Movement certainly encouraged women intellectuals to take action in national resistance just as their male peers, however, one of the problems facing these well-educated women elites who had experienced the May Fourth Movement was how to balance their feminist agenda and their urgent mission for national salvation. Cao Mengjun had made it clear in 1935 that women should liberate themselves from men and family first in order to shoulder equal responsibilities in public, which suggests that a feminist agenda would only provide support to women's participation in political movements. However, when women intellectuals joined the National Salvation Movement in 1936, they already felt the difficulty of propagandising any feminist idea without direct connection with national resistance.

The Women's Day (8 March) celebration in Shanghai in 1936 shows the passion and determination of local women intellectuals and activists for participating in the National Salvation Movement. But more important, it reflects the nuanced ideological and identical contradictions facing women intellectuals during their political participation for national resistance. *Women's Life* editor Peng Zigang produced a vivid news feature about the celebration, which took place at the Young Men's Christian Association on Sichuan Road and was followed by a women's parade toward Nanjing Road:

The gate of the Young Men's Christian Association was crowded with people: women workers, students, career women and housewives...the meeting room was too small and it was already hard to close the door, but more women kept squeezing in. They exchanged

smiles; waving hands from a distance and asking about each other's news [...] When the speeches began, a foreign lady, Ms Sanger came onto stage to talk about feminism, then about cinema and birth control. When she finally changed her topic to 'women and Christianity', the audience could not stand her anymore and booed her off the stage together with her "double-surnamed" translator. Then, people cheered and applauded to welcome He Xiangning to the stage.¹²¹

Hu Xiaqing, another attendee of the event, described how the salvation leader He Xiangning was passionately speaking to her audience:

With the help of her walking stick, He Xiangning stood on stage and spoke passionately for a long time. At last she raised her voice and shouted: "The two billion Chinese women should unite together to defeat the Japanese imperialism!" Before the end of the meeting, there were already more than a thousand women gathering outside for the parade toward Nanjing Road.¹²²

It is unclear whether the foreign feminist was rudely booed off the stage for her sole concentration on feminism or perhaps also for her identity as a foreigner. But it is apparent that the thought of taking action in national salvation had overwhelmed the audience thus a speech on feminism given by a foreign Christian feminist seemed irrelevant. However, this does not mean that the "woman problem" no longer concerned women intellectuals once they took part in national resistance. As the following chapters will demonstrate, for women intellectuals, a feminist agenda to achieve higher social positions and equal political rights was indispensable during their wartime political movements, while the contradictions between their gender and political identities remained a problem in their political participation.

¹²¹ The "foreign Ms Sanger" refers to the American Obstetrics nurse Margaret Sanger (1883-1966) who visited Shanghai for a second time in 1936 and her "double-surnamed translator" was Liu-Wang Liming, the general secretary of Chinese Women's Christian Temperance Union from 1926 to mid-1950s. Liu-Wang was also an active suffragist in Shanghai who founded the Shanghai Women's Suffrage Association. It was very likely that this foreign Ms was invited by Liu-Wang Liming to give a speech in this event. Peng Zigang, "Sanyue de julang" [the Surge of March], March 1936, SMA, C31-6-258, 135-137.

¹²² The extract from Hu Xiaqing's memoir, SMA, C31-6-258, 88-92.

In 1936, in the face of the deepening national crisis and irritated by Chiang Kai-shek's non-resistance policy, women intellectuals in Shanghai and Nanjing were eager to contribute to national resistance. The first obstacle they encountered, however, was not the advancing Japanese troops but the reluctant Nationalist government. Regardless of the lost territory to Japan in Manchuria, Chiang Kai-shek insisted on the policy of "resisting foreign aggression only after stabilising the country", with his effort paid to root out the communist forces and to avoid a war with Japan. Any political groups that supported the CCP's anti-Japanese actions were targeted by the KMT as communist accomplices. The KMT Central Propaganda Department published an announcement in *Shen Bao*: "We learnt about the CCP's secret plan to utilise cultural bodies and intellectuals with the disguise of the National Salvation Association [...] They are making a plot of resurgence with the aim to either deny the central government or overrule the regime."¹²³ The activities of the NSA were then severely restricted and NSA leaders were arrested and investigated for "assisting" the communist party.

On the night of 22 November, the female NSA leader Shi Liang was arrested by the KMT in Shanghai, while Cao Mengjun was arrested in Nanjing around the same time. After the arrests occurred, women intellectuals in Shanghai and Nanjing explored their social and political connections to put pressure on the Nationalist government. Only one day after the arrests, Hu Ziyang, the wife of NSA leader Zhang Naiqi, contacted the chief editor of *Li Bao* (立报) in Shanghai to ensure news about the arrests to be posted on the next day.¹²⁴ Three days later, women intellectuals in Shanghai approached Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen, who then urgently published a public statement to defend the purposes of the National Salvation Movement and to urge the government to release the arrested activists. It was declared by Song that: "The National Salvation Association is not against the government, neither is it supporting the CCP. It is to promote a united front of people regardless of their political parties or beliefs to win the War of national liberation".¹²⁵

¹²³ *Shen Bao*, 12 February, 1936.

¹²⁴ Zhang, *Zhongguo minzhu dangpai shi*, 154.

¹²⁵ *Jiuwang qingbao* [*Salvation Intelligence*], 29 November, 1936, SMA, C31-6-259, 250.

For Song Qingling, to support the NSA's resistance activities was a political and patriotic gesture, but to go to visit Shi Liang in prison was also because of her personal concern for an old friend. In 1933, Song Qingling had worked with Shi Liang, the erstwhile famous female lawyer in Shanghai, to rescue the undercover communist Deng Zhongxia.¹²⁶ This time when Song Qingling initiated the "go to prison" movement to rescue the imprisoned NSA leaders, she paid a special visit to Shi Liang, who had been detained in the women's prison of Suzhou for more than seven months. As Shi Liang recalled in her memoir, "sister Song encouraged me to keep on fighting [...] she hugged me tightly, and I felt my tears falling down."¹²⁷ Shen Zijiu, Hu Ziyang and Chen Bo'er also joined Song Qingling in her "go to prison" movement, making a statement by action that "if it is against the law to love and save our country, then we shall all go to prison!"

Between 1936 and 1937, Chiang Kai-shek's "non-resistance" government was not only challenged by the alliance of the Manchurian forces led by General Zhang Xueliang, the North-western forces (*Xibei Jun* 西北军) led by General Yang Hucheng and the communist forces, but also by the Japanese military advances in east China.¹²⁸ After the Xi'an Incident in December 1936 and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937, Chiang finally changed his policy to accept an anti-Japanese United Front composed of all political parties, groups and democratic forces. On 31 July 1937, the arrested NSA leaders in Shanghai and Nanjing were released by the KMT government. Despite the remaining distrust and antagonisms between the KMT, the CCP and other political factions and groups, the first stage of the War of Resistance commenced with a national commitment to the anti-Japanese United Front.

However, women intellectuals' commitment to the cause of national resistance was not the "final death knell to independent women's movement". Louise Edwards has challenged the view that a combination of KMT suppression, the exigencies of war, and the women activists'

¹²⁶ Shi, *Shi Liang zishu*, 10-12.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 39-40.

¹²⁸ For more information, please see Hans J. Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China 1925-1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 170-203.

own lack of interest resulted in the removal of politics from the feminist agenda.¹²⁹ Albeit giving their priority to the urgent mission of national resistance at the edge of the War, women intellectuals still tried to combine their feminist and political agendas while initiating independent women's salvation organisations. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated in the next section, the establishment of a nationwide women's organisation led by Song Meiling does not mean that women's independent political activism was completely submerged under the nation-run war mobilisation since 1937.¹³⁰ The defence of Greater Wuhan in 1938 saw the increase in women's political activism and the enlargement of the spaces for their political networking across different political parties and groups.

Wuhan 1938: The integration of women intellectuals' political networks

In 1938, Wuhan became the de facto capital of wartime China where the émigré KMT government institutions committed to resistance together with the other political parties, including its previous enemy the CCP. The political tolerance showed by the local authority during the defence of Wuhan resulted in the growth of the press. As MacKinnon argues, "The resulting range of publicly expressed opinion was unprecedented, stretching from the communist publications such as *Hongqi* (红旗) and *Xinhua Ribao* on the left, to *Kangzhan xiangdao* (抗战向导) and *Minyi* (民意) by the KMT on the right, and in between were publications from liberal intellectuals and minor political parties such as Zou Taofen's *Shenhuo* (生活) publications, and the organ of the National Socialist Party, *Zaisheng* (再生)."¹³¹ Not only was the political landscape reshaped during the wartime mobilisation for resistance, but also the mass culture. Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon both noticed the change in Chinese culture during this period: through choral singing, drama performances

¹²⁹ Edwards, *Gender, politics, and democracy*, 197.

¹³⁰ Norma Diamond, "Women under Kuomintang Rule: Variations on the Feminine Mystique", *Modern China* No.1 (1975): 3-45; Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy*, 201.

¹³¹ MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938*, 64.

and publication of various journals and newspapers, ordinary people from all walks of life were included in the producing of a “resistance” culture.¹³²

The emerging cultural and political space for resistance in Wuhan also supported the network development among Chinese intellectuals. When examining the populace that defended the Tri-Cities of Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang, Stephen MacKinnon noticed the extraordinarily high percentage of intellectuals who migrated to Wuhan from Nanjing and Shanghai as refugees, including most of the important names in Chinese literary, art, drama and university worlds at the time.¹³³ Women intellectuals, despite their different political affiliations, also migrated to Wuhan one after another between late 1937 and early 1938.

Various women’s organisations and groups therefore flourished in the tri-city: the Chinese Women’s Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance (中国妇女慰劳抗敌将士总会) was moved here from Shanghai, with its branches set up in Hankou and Wuchang; the Hubei Provincial Women’s Wartime Service Group (湖北省妇女战时工作团) was established in Wuchang while the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), the Wuhan Women’s Resistance Support Association (武汉妇女抗敌后援会), the Hankou branch of Hubei Provincial Women’s Wartime Service Group (湖北省妇女战时工作团汉口分团) being active in Hankou.¹³⁴ To co-operate militarily and politically with the KMT in the KMT-run areas, the CCP established the Wuhan Office of the Eight Route Army and the Yangtze Bureau. On 18 December 1937, Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), Deng Yingchao and Meng Qingshu arrived in Wuhan to lead the CCP Wuhan Office. Communist women leaders Deng Yingchao and Meng Qingshu also formed a women’s committee under the Yangtze Bureau to assist with women’s mobilisation in this region.¹³⁵

¹³² Lary, *The Chinese People at War*, 54-56; MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938*, 62-82.

¹³³ MacKinnon, “Refugee Flight at the Outset of Anti-Japanese War”, 126.

¹³⁴ Shen Zijiu, “Wo zouchu le Shanghai” [I Left Shanghai], in Shen Zijiu ed., *Kangzhan zhongde nizhanshi* [Women Warriors during the War of Resistance] (Zhanshi Press, 1938), 112-113.

¹³⁵ Li Guohua, “Kangzhan chuqi changjiangju lingdao xia de funügongzuo” [Women’s Work Led by the Yangtze Bureau at the Beginning of the War of Resistance], *Funü xueyuan* [Women’s Studies] 04 (1991): 29-30.

Travelling to Wuhan during the War was not an easy task for these women leaders and elites. After Shen Zijiu had left Shanghai in November 1937, she had to go to Hong Kong by sea first and then come to Wuhan by road through Canton, Guangxi, Hunan and Hubei provinces. On her long and dangerous journey across almost half of south China, she took the journal *Women's Life* with her all the way from Shanghai to Wuhan. To be able to avoid Japanese check points at the Wusong Port, Shen Zijiu took an Italian merchant ship and dressed up as a rich woman of high station. Even so, Shen's friends in Shanghai were still concerned for her safety and persuaded her to have her straight short hair permed in the most fashionable "airplane" style to be more convincing, for which Shen Zijiu felt embarrassed: "All of my friends in Shanghai were happy about this new hair because I no longer looked like the old me. But with this ridiculous hair, how would I be able to meet my friends in the inner land?"¹³⁶

For women intellectuals like Shen Zijiu, their migration to Wuhan was a new start in their life with new tasks and responsibilities. On board of the Italian cruise ship *Duke Russell*, Shen Zijiu was excited to find many familiar faces—Shi Liang, Guo Moruo, Zhang Naiqi and some other close friends of hers were taking the same route to Hong Kong by sea. When these intellectual friends sat together in the cabin and discussed about their plans in Wuhan, Shi Liang explicitly expressed her enthusiasm and confidence: "I am not modest, I am going to the hinterland to mobilise women for national salvation."¹³⁷

Like Shi Liang, Liu Qingyang, the NSA leader from Tianjin, also considered her journal to Wuhan more than just a temporary retreat from the cities that had fallen to the Japanese. On the train from Nanjing to Hankou, Liu ran into Ji Hong. According to Ji Hong's article, Liu Qingyang had actually lived an unhappy life between 1928 and 1937 as a housewife accompanying her husband Zhang Shenfu, who was teaching at Tsinghua University. During this time, Liu suspended her political activities and raised her two children at home. Many friends who knew little about her situation thought that she had simply given up her political career to enjoy a comfortable family life in Tsinghua. But Liu Qingyang felt that she was

¹³⁶ Shen, "Wo zouchu le Shanghai", 93.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 95.

trapped in desert or prison and lost her direction in life. After the War broke out, at the age of 44, she left her families in Tianjin and went to Wuhan on her own to join in national resistance. In Ji Hong's words, "her marriage, her family, even her children could not change her decision."¹³⁸

With this kind of passion and determination for national resistance, women leaders and elites travelled across the country and finally joined each other in Wuhan. Shen Ziju arrived in January and approximately one month later Shi Liang also reached Wuhan after a short stay in Hong Kong where she helped with establishing local women's organisations.¹³⁹ Liu Qingyang from Tianjin, Peng Zigang from Beiping, Ji Hong and Cao Mengjun from Nanjing had already arrived by the end of 1937. Other members of the *Women's Life* society such as Du Junhui, Chen Bo'er, Luo Qiong, Wang Ruqi, Luo Shuzhang and Lu Huinian joined them one after another in this city. Local women leaders and activists in Wuhan such as Li Wenyi and Yang Moxia were also quickly absorbed into this expanding women's community for national salvation and resistance.¹⁴⁰

The freezing temperatures of January 1938 and an unfamiliar city did not prevent women intellectuals from meeting each other frequently. Shen Ziju often ran into some old friends and acquaintances with whom she soon restored her *Women's Life* forums. Seeing the opening cultural and political space in Wuhan where she was able to circulate her resistance networks and ideas, Shen Ziju was excited about the potential for the unification of Chinese women to save the nation. In Shen Ziju's short memoir "From Shanghai to Wuhan", Wuhan in 1938 was certainly a city full of possibilities:

Hankou now is a sea of people that gather together from different places; you can be surprised by whom you run into in street [...] How could I expect to see Ms. Tang Guozhen again in Wuhan after our last meeting in Nanjing before the 18 September Incident? Ms. Tang introduced me to Ms. Xu Kairui from the KMT Central Women's

¹³⁸ Ji Hong, "Liu Qingyang nüshi sanshinian de fendou" [The Thirty-Year Fighting of Liu Qingyang], in Shen ed., *Kangzhan zhongde nüzhanishi*, 21-28.

¹³⁹ "The Introduction of Shi Liang", (undated), materials recollected by Fei Yingfen, SMA, C31-6-258, 72-76.

¹⁴⁰ Shen, "Wo zouchu le Shanghai," 112-113.

Department, as well as Ms. Lü Xiaodao, Ms. Fu Boqun and Ms. Zhuang Jing etc. from the Chinese Women's Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance. The Japanese enemies have driven us together from different places and positions, and perhaps the real unity of Chinese women would come true. In the past, there were antagonisms among us both in theory and in practice, but now it was possible for us to overcome the barriers to communicate with each other and to fight against enemies from outside.¹⁴¹

The previous “antagonisms”, by which Shen Zijiu meant the different political ideas held by women intellectuals from the KMT and those from the CCP, were not to obstruct the cross-party United Front among women in Wuhan. The timing was perfect for Shen Zijiu to revamp her *Women's Life* reading group so as to refresh her old contacts and to attract new ones. Shen's old friend Luo Qiong recalled the various social events organised by Shen in Wuhan: “As the chief editor of *Women's Life*, Shen Zijiu organised meetings of different scales and types amongst upper-class women in Wuhan; she also participated in various forums and tea parties to expand social connections with women from different professions.”¹⁴² It was at one of these tea parties organised by the National Council on Foreign Relations (国民外交协会) that CCP women leaders Deng Yingchao and Meng Qingshu were both introduced to Shen Zijiu:

At this moment, someone introduced a new friend to me, ‘this is Ms. Deng Yingchao.’ In front of me was a lady who appeared to be firm and robust. ‘Ms. Deng Yingchao, the one who finished the Long March...’ with this thought in my mind, I hesitated for a second before extending my hand in greeting. Seeing that I was stunned, the introducer continued, ‘she is the wife of Zhou Enlai.’ At the same time, she pointed at another lady who was in her military uniform and looked very pretty, ‘this is Ms. Meng Qingshu, the wife of Chen Shaoyu (Wang Ming).’ I could feel my blood rushing through my veins and toward my

¹⁴¹ Shen Zijiu, “Cong Shanghai dao Hankou” [From Shanghai to Hankou], *Women's Life* Vol.5 Issue 8 (1938).

¹⁴² Luo Qiong, “Shen Zijiu zai Shanghai he Wuhan de rizi li” [Shen Zijiu in Shanghai and Wuhan], *Popular Tribune* 10 (1989): 28.

cheeks. After the meeting, Ji Hong asked why I looked so excited, I told her: ‘today’s meeting is so fascinating. Here we met KMT women leaders, CCP women leaders as well as local women activists in Wuhan. Their passion is burning me, don’t you feel the same?’¹⁴³

From that day onwards, Deng Yingchao and Meng Qingshu were frequently invited to *Women’s Life* reading group to give seminars and talks. At these meetings, not only did women intellectuals exchange opinions on women’s issues in war, but they also shared deep concerns about the nation’s future and felt the urge to save refugee children in war zones. At one meeting organised by the local YWCA in Wuhan, the communist film star Chen Bo’er proposed to rescue refugee children from war zones, and her proposal was agreed and supported by other women activists at the meeting.¹⁴⁴ NSA members Shen Zijiu, Cao Mengjun, Liu Qingyang and Du Junhui successfully approached wives of KMT senior officials such as General Feng Yuxiang’s wife Li Dequan, General Huang Qixiang’s wife Guo Xiuyi, the Mayor of Wuhan Wu Guozhen’s wife Huang Zhuoqun for their support. YWCA leaders Zhang Aizhen and Chen Jiyi, who had been studying with Song Meiling in the US, were also involved in the early preparatory work for rescuing refugee children. Joined the group were also many unaligned women social elites of different professions such as the songwriter and poet An E.

On 20 January 1938, *Women’s Life* published NSA leader Shen Junru’s announcement “the Establishment of the National Association for Refugee Children”—a call for united effort “to save and nurse the nation’s children and to revenge on the Japanese invaders.” On 24 January, the preparatory committee of the National Association for Refugee Children (NARC) was founded at the YWCA in Hankou.¹⁴⁵ Considering that a strong connection with

¹⁴³ Shen, “Cong Shanghai dao Hankou”.

¹⁴⁴ Li Wenyi, “Zhanshi ertong baoyuhui de pianduan huiyi” [Memories of the Wartime Association for Refugee Children], in Wu Xiuping ed., *Li Wenyi jinian wenji* [Collected Works of Li Wenyi] (Qunyan Press, 2000), 247-248.

¹⁴⁵ Gu Weiming, “Zhongguo zhanshi ertong baoyuhui shulue” [An Introduction to the National Association for Refugee Children], *Kangri zhanzheng yanjiu* [The War of Resistance Studies] 4 (2006): 2-3.

the KMT would benefit the NARC's work both politically and financially, Deng Yingchao suggested inviting Song Meiling to lead the organisation in Wuhan. Deng wisely asked NSA members Shi Liang, Liu Qingyang and Shen Zijiu to meet with Song.

In Shi Liang's eyes, Song Meiling was "appealing and good at dealing with people".¹⁴⁶ Since the 1930s, Song Meiling had enjoyed taking part in different political and public affairs, promoting the "New Life Movement" and calling for women's contributions in war. Song immediately agreed to lead the NARC but suggested aligning the new organisation with her "New Life Movement" Women's Advisory Council. On the one hand, Song Meiling attempted to show her indisputable commitment to rescuing children together with women leaders from the NSA and the CCP. On the other hand, she also expected to centralise women's organisations in Wuhan and to ensure that KMT members play a dominant role. Nonetheless, this was a gesture of reconciliation made by Song when frictions and distrust still continued between the KMT and the CCP, and when NSA members Shi Liang and Cao Mengjun just walked out of a KMT prison.

With Song Meiling's support, the launch of the NARC was organised with a publicity stunt. On 6 March, the first news about the launching ceremony of the NARC was posted in *Shen Bao* (Hankou Edition):

The National Association for Refugee Children will be launched on 10 March. The ceremony will take place at St. Louis Girls' middle school at 3 pm. Madam Chiang (Song Meiling), Madam Feng (Li Dequan), Wu Guozhen's wife Huang Zhuoqun, Huang Qixiang's wife Guo Xiuyi, as well as Zhang Aizhen, Chen Jiyi, An E, Cao Mengjun and Tang Guozhen will chair the meeting; Chen Lifu and Shao Lizi will give speeches.¹⁴⁷

On 10 March, an invitation to the NARC launching ceremony was again published in *Shen Bao*. It encouraged all political institutions, groups, schools and presses to attend the event.

¹⁴⁶ Shi, *Shi Liang zishu*, 49.

¹⁴⁷ At the beginning of the War of Resistance, *Shen Bao* ceased publication in Shanghai. Its Hankou edition started in Wuhan from 15 January 1938 and lasted until 31 July 1938; while its Hong Kong edition started from 1 March 1938 and lasted until 10 July 1939. *Shen Bao* resumed publication in Shanghai on 10 October 1938. *Shen Bao*, Hankou edition, 6 March, 1938, SMA.

And at 3pm in the afternoon, over 700 women activists and guests gathered together at St. Louis Girls' middle school for the ceremony.¹⁴⁸ The first committee meeting of the NARC was called three days after the launching ceremony, the members of the standing committee and their political backgrounds are shown in the table below:

KMT	Song Meiling, Huang Zhuoqun, Guo Xiuyi, Tang Guozhen, Chen Yiyun, Xu Kairui, Zhu Lun, Ren Peidao, Zhuang Jing, Lü Xiaodao
NSA	Shi Liang, Shen Zijiu, Cao Mengjun, Liu Qingyang
CCP	Deng Yingchao, Meng Qingshu, Xu Jingping
Non-Partisan	Li Dequan, Chen Jiyi, Zhang Aizhen, An E

Table 2: Members of the standing committee of the NARC

The table shows that the establishment of the NARC and the communication among women intellectuals from different political backgrounds should not be understood as a simple result of the tentative political cooperation between the KMT and the CCP at the beginning of the War. The NSA framework provided an important platform for women leaders from the KMT and the CCP to communicate and work together. NSA leaders Shi Liang, Shen Zijiu and Cao Mengjun had developed strong personal linkages not only with senior KMT officials and their wives but also with underground communist members in Shanghai and Nanjing before the War. During the defence of Greater Wuhan, they further enhanced political relations with senior KMT and CCP women leaders and institutionalised their networks through the NARC. Many unaligned social elites and religious figures such as Li Dequan and her daughter Feng Fufa, Zhang Aizhen and Chen Jiyi were also involved in the NARC and thus provided women's resistance networks in Wuhan with broader political and financial supports. Only the consistency and complexity in women intellectuals' political networking in the late 1930s can explain the birth of the NARC, a national women's organisation which involved women intellectuals from different political backgrounds, and

¹⁴⁸ *Shen Bao*, Hankou edition, 10 March, 1938, SMA.

which effectively gathered and transformed their political resources both at the local and national level.

The WAC: A national women's organisation but not a women's United Front

After the fall of Xuzhou in May 1938, the Nationalist government deliberately breached the Huayuankou dike of the Yellow River in June, in order to slow down the enemy advances towards Wuhan. The battle of Wuhan lasted for over four months in a broad area around the city.¹⁴⁹ Morale was high among women intellectuals who were committed to defending the city. The heroic defence of the Greater Wuhan was compared with the women's defence of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. To mobilise more women to participate in the city's defence, Shi Liang passionately spoke to her compatriot sisters on 8 March, the Women's Day of 1938:

To defend Madrid, the Spanish government army have mobilised 150,000 women to fight both in the battlefield and behind the frontline. Their significant war efforts have been shown to the world. In order to strengthen the defence of Wuhan, we should also immediately mobilise young women in this region to support our political and military institutions for resistance.¹⁵⁰

For Song Meiling, the timing was perfect to advocate a women's United Front for resistance in 1938 Wuhan. Not long after the NARC was established in March, she decided to organise a women's summit in Lushan, a beautiful mountain resort about 300 kilometres away from Wuhan, to meet with the most prominent women leaders from different regions and political parties. When American author John Gunther visited Wuhan with his wife in 1938, he likened Song to "the president of a really first-rate American woman's club."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ For more information, please see Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1949*, 155-170; Lary, *The Chinese People at War*, 61-62.

¹⁵⁰ Shi Liang, "Jinnian sanba jinianzhong de teshu renwu" [The Special Task for This Year's 8 March Ceremony], *Xinhua Ribao*, 8 March, 1938.

¹⁵¹ Laura Tyson Li, *Madame Chiang Kai-Shek: China's Eternal First Lady* (USA, Canada: Grove Press, 2006), 143.

This comment indicates the special attention Song Meiling paid to building her personal network among women leaders, elites and intellectuals in Wuhan. The fact that Song Meiling used her personal name to organise a nationwide women leaders' summit further suggests that women intellectuals' wartime political participation and networking, even at the national level, was largely based on their personal ties across political boundaries.



Fig. 2. Women leaders and activists posing at the Lushan Women's Summit. (20 May 1938)

Source: Chongqing Library Republican-era Collections

The Lushan Women's Summit was Song Meiling's debut on the wartime political stage as the leader of Chinese women in national resistance. She certainly treated it more seriously than a "women's club". In order to have more time for preparation, the date of the summit was postponed from 5 May to 20 May. Song's personal assistant Zhang Aizhen and famous women intellectuals such as Xiong Zhi and Lei Jieqiong were all involved in the preparation work. Forum topics and the guest list were decided in the second preparatory meeting on 12 May. 58 women leaders and activists from different regions and political backgrounds were invited, including 18 from Hankou, 8 from Nanchang, 6 from Hong Kong, 4 each from Chongqing, Changsha and Guangzhou, 3 each from Chengdu and Guangxi, and 2 each from

Yunnan, Guizhou, Fujian and Guling. However, some guests from Hong Kong, Yunnan and Guizhou could not manage to travel to Lushan presumably due to the long distance also the poor transportation during the War. The number of women leaders who actually attended the summit should be less than 50.¹⁵² These guests were selected from a diverse range of political parties, institutions and professions. The table below shows the political alignments of the famous women leaders who attended the summit:

KMT	Song Meiling*, Huang Zhuoqun*, Tang Guozhen*, Chen Yiyun*, Xu Kairui*, Shen Huilian, Zhang Weizhen, Zhao Maohua, Qian Yonghe
NSA	Shi Liang*, Shen Zijiu*, Liu Qingyang*, Peng Daozhen
CCP	Deng Yingchao*, Meng Qingshu*
Non-Partisan	Li Dequan*, Chen Jiye*, Zhang Aizhen*, An E*, Wu Yifang

Table 3: Part of the women attendees at the Lushan Women's Summit¹⁵³

Based on the agreement reached at the Lushan Women's Summit, the "New Life Movement" Women's Advisory Council was restructured and expanded on 1 July in Wuhan. The primary focus of the organisation was changed from "improving women's lives and directing their personal development" to "directing women on the issues of resistance and national reconstruction".¹⁵⁴ New departments were created to improve the function of the WAC in the areas of war release, member training, cultural development, battlefield service and communication. Significant changes were also made to the organisation's personnel arrangements: CCP members Deng Yingchao, Meng Qingshu, and Kang Keqing were selected into the 10-people standing committee, while NSA members Shi Liang, Shen Zijiu,

¹⁵² Zhang Aizhen, "Funü tanhuahui gongzuobaogao" [The Meeting Report of the Women's Forum], 20 May 1938, Chongqing Library Republican-era Collections. The actual number of women attendees to the forum is debatable. According to Shan Bao's reports on 8 June and 24 July 1938, there were over fifty women leaders participated in the forum. *Shen Bao*, Hankou Edition, 8 June and 24 July, 1938.

¹⁵³ Names with a star mark are women intellectuals who were positioned in the standing committee of the NARC. Xia, *Fun üzhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 108-111.

¹⁵⁴ Xia, *Fun üzhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 121.

Cao Mengjun and Liu Qingyang were selected into its directory committee composed of 36 members. As the following table shows, the new WAC departments were not dominated by KMT members. NSA leaser Shi Liang was appointed as the director of the Liaison Committee, Shen Zijiu as the director of the Cultural Development, and Liu Qingyang as the director in charge of member training.

WAC Departments	Chief Director	Political Background
Liaison	Shi Liang	NSA
Culture	Shen Zijiu	NSA
Training	Liu Qingyang	NSA
Release	Tang Guozhen	KMT
Battlefield Service	Chen Yiyun	KMT
Life Guidance	Huang Peilan	KMT
Administration	Xie Lanyu	Non-partisan
Production	Yu Yingtang	Non-partisan
Refugee Children	Niu Minhua	Non-partisan

Table 4: The WAC departments¹⁵⁵

The above lists of main participants in the NARC, the Lushan Women's Summit and the WAC show that two thirds of the standing-committee members and directors of the WAC had attended the Lushan Women's Summit. And the majority of women leaders and intellectuals who were invited to Lushan had been positioned in the NARC standing committee. The consistency in leadership indicates that when Song Meiling expanded the WAC to include women leaders from other parties and groups, she relied on the broad political networks and connections held by the émigré women intellectuals in Wuhan. The overlapped memberships across the three national women's organisations, namely the NARC,

¹⁵⁵ Nanfang dangshi ziliao zhengji xiaozu ed., *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* [The Party History Materials on the CCP South Bureau] (Chongqing Press, 1986), Volume 5, 464-465.

the Lushan Women's Summit, and the WAC, demonstrate that, in terms of their geographical distribution and political connection, women intellectuals' political networking had reached the national level by 1938.

Conclusion

The wartime migration and mobilisation for national resistance enabled the formation of geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for women intellectuals to participate in national affairs and to network beyond party lines and political boundaries. The intertwined personal ties and networks maintained by women intellectuals in the 1930s not only facilitated their political organisation for national resistance, but also enhanced the communication between different political parties and groups, in particular the KMT, the CCP and the NSA. Shen Zijiu, Du Junhui, Ji Hong, Cao Mengjun, Shi Liang and Hu Ziyang, among other educated women elites in east China, initiated their local societies and organisations in the face of national crisis, and they further integrated and institutionalised their resistance networks at a national level in 1938 Wuhan.

It would, however, go too far to argue that a stable and seamless national United Front among Chinese women was established by 1938. There are three reasons: first, antagonisms and distrust still existed and continued to grow between the different political parties despite the overwhelming campaign for national resistance since the War broke out, thus to what degree this United Front would function still largely depended on the relations between the different parties, in particular between the KMT and the CCP. Second, women intellectuals' political networks were primarily based on personal ties and private activities within the upper-class social circles and the urban spaces. Therefore they barely reached the majority of working class women. Conditions for women's mobilisation were also different in the Japanese-occupied region, the CCP-controlled region and the vast rural area. Third, the many and various political proposals and ideas for achieving national resistance only resulted in a shifting if also vague ideology for women intellectuals' political engagement and

identification during the War, let alone that women intellectuals suffered physical divisions, dislocations and displacements as the War stretched on.

On 25 October 1938, Wuhan fell to Japan, despite the over eight-month “heroic defence” of the city. All the efforts of the patriotic anti-Japanese United Front were in vain. As the War reached a stalemate and the Nationalist government retreated to Chongqing, the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for women intellectuals’ political engagement shifted. The next chapter thus begins with women intellectuals’ migration to the hinterland; Chongqing, the wartime capital of the Nationalist government, marks the next hub of women intellectuals’ political networks. Focusing on the constitutionalist movement led by wartime intellectuals in Chongqing, chapter 2 seeks to explain how women intellectuals relocated their political networks in the hinterland and enhanced their political connections across geo-political boundaries in the early 1940s.

Chapter 2

After the fall of Wuhan in October 1938, Liu Qingyang and her trainees from the WAC training class all had to retreat to the hinterland with the Nationalist government. After more than six months long journey through the warzones, they arrived in Chongqing in the late spring of 1939 when the city was suffering severe Japanese air attacks. The urgent tasks facing them, like all of the émigré women leaders and intellectuals in Chongqing, were how to settle down in a strange and remote town far from their home in the Japanese-occupied east China and how to maintain their organisation and activities for resistance.

The Japanese advance slowed down after most of China's coastal regions fell, but as Rana Mitter has suggested, there was nothing calm or stable about China's situation since the fall of Wuhan.¹⁵⁶ While the Nationalist government transferred the majority of its political and intellectual resources to the hinterland to avoid the War, the Japanese were enhancing their political authority in the occupied cities in east China, and the communists were developing their bases through land reforms and guerrilla wars in the vast rural areas in north and northwest. Since the three wartime regimes all needed to maintain and reinforce their power, the geo-political landscape of wartime China was not only being shaped by military manoeuvres, major battles and local conflicts, but also by the complex communication and interconnections between the various political authorities, institutions and organisations.

Mitter argues that Chongqing became symbolic of a new compact between state and society: while the state should demand much more of its population for the crisis it is faced, the citizenry should expect much more in return from those who governed them.¹⁵⁷ This chapter shows that “constitutionalism, democracy and women's political rights” were what Chinese intellectuals expected from the retreated Nationalist government in Chongqing.

¹⁵⁶ Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1949*, 171.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 194.

Women intellectuals, who had migrated to Chongqing in 1938, soon participated in the constitutionalist movement aimed at achieving resistance along with enforcing political reforms. Their participation in the constitutionalist movement through institutions such as the WAC and the People's Political Council further enhanced their political engagement and networking not only beyond party lines, but also across the geo-political boundaries between the KMT-controlled areas, the CCP base areas and the Japanese-occupied regions.

Helen Schneider points out that working through the WAC allowed women a space to enact their agendas for national development, to define their responsibilities as modern citizens, and to prove that they could, like men, modernise, civilise and reform because they had equal education and professional qualifications.¹⁵⁸ The constitutionalist movement in the early 1940s, like the National Salvation Movement, helped enlarge the spaces for women intellectuals in different regions and political parties to engage in national politics and to develop their political networks. NSA women leaders Shi Liang, Liu Qingyang and their colleagues in the WAC chaired a series of women's constitutional forums in late 1939 and early 1940. Not only in cities such as Chongqing, Kunming and Hong Kong, but also in the communist wartime capital Yan'an, women intellectuals were involved in the movement and exchanged their experience. Their political participation and interaction during this period, as Song Qingling stated, was already a significant triumph on their way toward democracy and freedom.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Helen Schneider, "Mobilising Women: The Women's Advisory Council, Resistance and Reconstruction during China's War with Japan", *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 11:2 (2012): 217.

¹⁵⁹ The Speech by Song Qingling at the gathering for the International Women's Day in Hong Kong, 8 March, 1939, source from *Zhongguo fun ü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)* [*Historical Materials on Chinese Women's Movements 1937-1945*] (Zhongguo fun ü Press, 1991), 246.

Big goals and small tasks: Retreating from Wuhan to Chongqing

Before the Nationalist government was moved to Chongqing, the various minor political parties and groups in Wuhan had already advocated political democracy as the foundation of national resistance. The growing pressure from the political opposition made Chiang Kai-shek decide to establish the People's Political Council (PPC) as a political institution that summons councils of delegates to discuss national issues and to supervise the promulgation of the constitution. Functioning as a "wartime parliament" under the regime of Chiang Kai-shek,¹⁶⁰ the PPC included all political parties and groups as well as non-partisans in the discussion of national affairs. Amongst the 200 members of the first council, 10 were women activists selected from different parties and groups: Wu Zhimei, Luo Heng, Tao Xuan, Liu Hengjing, Zhang Xiaomei, Shi Liang, Liu-Wang Liming, Deng Yingchao, Wu Yifang and Yu Weihua.¹⁶¹ The majority of these women members were from the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee, while the non-KMT women members, namely Shi Liang, Liu-Wang Liming, Deng Yingchao and Wu Yifang were unexceptionally affiliated with the WAC despite their different political backgrounds.

The PPC provided democratic intellectuals with a political institution to circulate their political ideas and networks, but there still lacked a nationwide political league which could centralise the many and various minor political parties and groups for the purpose of achieving resistance and democracy. Shi Liang and her NSA peers therefore decided to form a new democratic organisation under the existing structure of the National Salvation Association. After two months of preparation from May to July, the League for National Resistance and Reconstruction (*Kangzhan jianguo tongzhihui* 抗战建国同志会, hereafter *Tongzhihui*) took shape in Wuhan.

¹⁶⁰ Edwards, "Moving from the vote into citizenship", 6; Edwards, *Gender, politics, and democracy*, 193.

¹⁶¹ *Guomin canzhenghui shiliao* [The Historical Materials about the People's Political Council] (Taipei: Guomin canzhenghui shiliao bianzuan weiyuanhui, 1962), 9-10.

It is crucial to understand why democratic intellectuals were extremely keen on establishing a democratic league for the purpose of resistance, after numerous salvation organisations had already been founded and merged into the NSA. With more or less the same agenda and membership, *Tongzhihui* seemed a redundant institution within the structure of the NSA. The reason is, as stated earlier in chapter 1, that the NSA itself was only a loose organisation composed of patriotic intellectuals from various political backgrounds; therefore it was far from being a stable political force to balance between the KMT and the CCP. Seeing that the PPC had provided a cross-party framework where different political parties could exchange ideas and enhance connections, the chief members of the NSA highly expected *Tongzhihui* to become a centralised democratic organisation, which could help them realise their democratic claims through national resistance and reform. Six departments, namely the economic, political, education, career, youth, and women's department, were set up within *Tongzhihui* to support its full political function. As members of the NSA, women activists Shen Zijiu, Shi Liang, Hu Ziyang, Luo Shuzhang and Cao Mengjun hence gained their positions at the women's department of *Tongzhihui*.¹⁶²

This change demonstrated that the NSA had transformed from a loose political umbrella organisation to a more centralised democratic institution, in which women intellectuals' participation suggests their political identification with the minor political parties and groups. The sentiment of nationalism and patriotism, as the first response to the Japanese invasion in Nanjing and Shanghai, was then replaced by specific and concrete political goals:

1. to support the government and the leader for the victory of the War and the liberation of the nation,
2. to enhance the unity at home and to achieve the unification of the country,
3. to assist the government with mobilising the masses,
4. to strengthen democratic institutions and to pursue "governance of the people",
5. to claim the right to freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of association,
6. to develop wartime economy and to improve the well-being of people,

¹⁶² Zhou Tiandu and Sun Caixia eds., *Jiuguohui shiliaoji* [*The Historical Materials of the National Salvation Association*] (Zhongyang bianyi Press, 2006), 481-482.

7. to guarantee wartime education and to support mass culture,
8. to provide help and assistance to each other, and to conquer bitterness and hardness.¹⁶³

The above statement shows that as early as 1938 in Wuhan, three years before the official establishment of the Federation of Democratic Parties in Chongqing, the NSA had already positioned itself as a political supporter and reformer of the Nationalist government, while “democracy” was seen as a necessary if not the only route to achieve national resistance. When women intellectuals such as Shi Liang, Shen Zijiu and Cao Mengjun joined *Tongzhihui*, they did not just commit themselves to the nation’s resistance against imperialist invaders, but also identified themselves with the minor democratic parties to achieve a social and political reform in China.

However, the fall of Wuhan in October forced the Nationalist government to move further into the hinterland; women intellectuals had to suspend their activities in Wuhan and retreat again. Located in southwest China where the Yangtze River and the Jialing River meet, Chongqing was believed to be protected from Japanese attacks by the steep Yangtze Gorges. From late 1938 to early 1939, as the headquarters of the wartime Nationalist government, Chongqing was transformed from a remote provincial city into the wartime capital of China.¹⁶⁴ The many and various newly founded political institutions and organisations in Wuhan, such as the PPC, the NARC, the WAC as well as *Tongzhihui* were then relocated along with the retreating Nationalist government in Chongqing in order to survive the protracted warfare and to continue resistance.

Moving with the government were also the majority of China’s educational, economic institutions, as well as industrial and manufacturing equipments. As Sean Dolan has stated, “In 1938, 94 of China’s 108 colleges were forced to close or moved inland. 14,000 tons of industrial equipments were moved up along the Yangtze River to the hinterland.”¹⁶⁵ The number of refugees and migrants from the war-affected lower Yangtze River basin to

¹⁶³ Ibid, 497-498.

¹⁶⁴ Lary, *The Chinese People At War*, 86.

¹⁶⁵ Sean Dolan, *Chiang Kai-Shek* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 80.

Chongqing also soared. Known as just a small provincial trading centre before the War, Chongqing saw its population quickly increase fivefold, to up to 1 million during the war years. In Dolan's words, "The mountainous town was soon transformed into what the writer Brookes Atkinson called 'a witches' fairground of anxieties, suspicions and intrigue.'"¹⁶⁶

Barely had they settled down in the city of Wuhan, the group of women intellectuals had to migrate again all the way up along the Yangtze River. Chongqing therefore became a second hub of women intellectuals' political networks after the fall of Wuhan. Most NSA leaders such as Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun and Shen Zijiu followed the NARC, the WAC and the PPC to Chongqing. Women leaders of the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee such as Tang Guozhen, Shen Huilian, Chen Yiyun and Liu Hengjing also resumed their organisations in Chongqing in early 1939. The CCP Yangtze Bureau of Wuhan, the office of the Eighth-route Army as well as the communist party organs such as *Xinhua Ribao* and *the Masses* (*Qunzhong* 群众) all had moved inland by the end of 1938. In January 1939, the CCP South Bureau was officially established in Chongqing, which replaced the Yangtze Bureau to supervise the united-front framework in both south and south-west China. And a women's committee was immediately formed under the CCP South Bureau, led by Deng Yingchao, Zhang Yuqin, Liao Siguang and Lu Jingru.¹⁶⁷

Although these women intellectuals had been working together in the same organisation as close colleagues in Wuhan, they did not migrate to Chongqing at the same time or in the same way: the privileged PPC women delegates such as Shi Liang, Deng Yingchao and Liu Hengjing arrived in late October, and they were warmly welcomed in Chongqing by about 500 local women activists who organised a welcome reception on 26 October.¹⁶⁸ But when Liu Qingyang finally arrived in Chongqing, it was already April 1939 and the city was bathed in Japanese air raids. Instead of enjoying a ceremonious reception, Liu started her first weeks

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 81-82.

¹⁶⁷ Li Zhongjie, *Zhonggong zhongyang nanfangju de tongyizhanxian gongzuo* [The United-Front Framework under the CCP South Bureau] (Zhongyang dangshi Press, 2009), 10 & 28.

¹⁶⁸ Zhou Tiandu, "Kangrizhanzheng shiqi de Shi Liang" [Shi Liang during the War of Resistance], *Modern Chinese History Studies* March (1989): 196.

in Chongqing managing tea stalls at roadside to offer assistance to the refugees swarming into the city. The 400 women trainees in Liu Qingyang's WAC training group, however, arrived in June after walking for more than half a year through the warzones.

Worse still, Chongqing did not transform into a well-planned capital city overnight because of the arrival of the Nationalist government. As Lee McIssac puts it, the poverty and backwardness of this inland town overwhelmed its foreign visitors and sojourners from central and east China, and detracted from the image of modernity that the government wished its capital cities to project.¹⁶⁹ The oral history of women in wartime Chongqing produced by Li Danke further shows how the chaotic life and intense air raids inflicted trauma and ruptures on women who had migrated from lower Yangtze River region to Chongqing to avoid warfare.¹⁷⁰ Although women intellectuals had relatively better political and financial means compared with the flight refugees, they were not physically and mentally immune to these immediate ruptures when they arrived in Chongqing—to settle down and start over was already a big goal to achieve for any newcomers to this disorderly and repeatedly bombarded city.

When Liu Qingyang finally recovered her WAC training class in Chongqing, the first difficulty she and her trainees encountered was the thick and over 5-feet tall weeds rampantly growing in the neglected school playground. A task as trivial as “pulling out weeds” was important for boosting the morale among women intellectuals who had just arrived in this strange city. Song Meiling even organised an event by herself to celebrate this achievement.¹⁷¹

Nonetheless, the “esprit of resistance” in 1939 Chongqing could not compare with that in Wuhan in 1938. The political activism of women intellectuals was overshadowed by the unpredictable future of the protracted war. For these émigré women intellectuals who had just experienced the fall of Wuhan and an arduous journey to Chongqing, their big goals to

¹⁶⁹ McIsaac, “The City as Nation: Creating a Wartime Capital in Chongqing”, 175.

¹⁷⁰ Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*.

¹⁷¹ Liu Fangqing, “Wode muqin Liu Qingyang” [My Mother Liu Qingyang], *Research on the Hui* 02 (2005): 170.

achieve resistance and democracy had to start with small tasks to recover their organisations, for which, political mobilisation was urgently needed.

Mobilising the locals: The WAC Liaison Committee

Although progress had been made by the WAC in mobilising women to participate in national resistance, by the time the Nationalist government retreated to Chongqing, local women in Chongqing were still considered as “conservative and rooted in clan and countryside”.¹⁷² As McIsaac’s research on wartime Chongqing shows, migrants from east China, who were called “downriver people” (*Xiangjiangren* 下江人 people from the lower Yangtze River region) by local people, not only encountered a cultural shock of this underdeveloped mountainous region but also faced the difficulty of communicating and identifying themselves with the locals.¹⁷³ To reinforce a national identity and to boost the morale for national resistance in this new capital, the relocated government needed to speak to its local citizens, including local women.

On 14 January, Song Meiling gave her first public speech to local women in Chongqing. Despite the cold weather and the furious air raids, Song spoke to a crowd at the Xinjiao Meeting Hall (新交礼堂). In order to ensure that the message from Madame Chiang could reach more women in Chongqing, the WAC published an open letter to local women’s organisations and groups, stressing the following tasks as the priority of current women’s movement:

1. to expand and to consolidate the unity of women,
2. to encourage women’s contribution to resistance across the nation,
3. to admit that so far only a small number of upper-class women have participated in national institutions and organisations; women from all social strata should be further

¹⁷² Mitter, *China’s War with Japan 1937-1949*, 180.

¹⁷³ McIsaac, “The City as Nation: Creating a Wartime Capital in Chongqing”, 177-181.

mobilised to take part in national resistance and reconstruction.”¹⁷⁴

Liaison between the WAC and local women’s communities therefore became the first step to mobilise local women in Chongqing. The WAC Liaison Committee, chaired by the NSA leader Shi Liang, was responsible for enhancing communication and cooperation among women organisations at both the national and the local level.

As one of the nine departments within the WAC, the Liaison Committee was established in Wuhan, which horizontally connected various local organisations and vertically linked together all levels of “New Life Movement” women’s service groups led by KMT political and military institutions. In Wuhan, the Liaison Committee strengthened the ties between the most active women’s organisations such as the WAC, the NARC and the YWCA, and absorbed other 16 local women’s organisations and 9 local women’s groups; while out of Wuhan, it established contacts with all YWCA provincial branches, 63 women’s war-relief branches,¹⁷⁵ 17 NARC branches and 43 other women’s bodies and groups.¹⁷⁶ The Liaison Committee also organised a tea party in Wuhan to bring together 35 women representatives from local women’s groups and societies, who agreed on organising women’s forums every other week to refresh and expand WAC networks at the local level.¹⁷⁷

From 1939 to 1940, the WAC Liaison Committee continued playing an essential role in restoring and connecting women’s networks during their relocation in Chongqing. To strengthen its ties with local women’s communities in Chongqing, the WAC Liaison Committee opened a joint office with local women’s organisations and groups, and organised

¹⁷⁴ *Xinyun fun ü zhidao weiyuanhui gongzuo banian* [Eight-Year Work Summary of the Women’s Advisory Council] (The Women’s Advisory Council, 1946), 187-190, Nanjing Library Republican-era Collections.

¹⁷⁵ Here “war-relief branches” refers to all the branches and sub-branches of the Chinese Women’s Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance [中国妇女慰劳抗战将士总会], which was founded by Song Meiling in Nanjing on 1 August 1937. According to the data collected in 1941, the association had 41 branches and 54 sub-branches in China as well as 17 branches overseas. Please see Hong Yizhen, *Zhongguo guomindang fun ü gongzuo zhi yanjiu* [Research on the KMT Women’s Work] (Taiwan: Guoshiguan Press, 2010), 211.

¹⁷⁶ *Xinyun fun ü zhidao weiyuanhui sanzhou nian jinian tekan*, 51.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 186.

women's forums in different city districts to attract women audience from all walks of life. The tradition of having a joint meeting fortnightly was also maintained by women intellectuals in Chongqing. Not only local women's organisations sent their representatives, but also Deng Yingchao and her colleagues from the CCP South Bureau, namely Zhang Xiaomei, Lu Jingru, Liao Siguang and Zhang Yuqin attended these joint meetings.¹⁷⁸

On 8 February 1939, the WAC Liaison Committee organised the first women's forum in Chongqing on the topic of "women's suffrage". Communist leader Deng Yingchao gave a talk that highlighted women's roles in reforming and liberating the nation by means of democratic politics. *Xinhua Ribao* published a news feature about this forum and called for the participation of all women in the burgeoning political movements for democracy and constitutionalism:

Women's liberation should not be separated from the nation's liberation, and the nation's liberation could never be completed without women's efforts. Therefore it is important to fully achieve women's suffrage, which at the present means to realise democratic governance and to allow women to participate in democratic politics.¹⁷⁹

Starting from March 1939, the WAC Liaison Committee organised joint meetings together with different local women's organisations and groups including, among others, Shen Zijiu's *Women's Life Society*, Ni Feijun's Chongqing Women's Service Group for Refugees (重庆妇女难民服务团), the Chongqing branch of the Chinese Women's Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance and the women's group under the Hui-People National Salvation Association (回民救国协会妇女组).¹⁸⁰ Although these joint meetings did not reach out to ordinary women from all walks of life as Deng Yingchao had wished, they certainly provided Deng and the CCP South Bureau with the opportunity to develop their political networks within local women's organisations in Chongqing. As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, these networks proved to be crucial for the maintenance of women's cross-party communication after the New Fourth Army Incident.

¹⁷⁸ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 466.

¹⁷⁹ *Xinhua Ribao*, 9 February, 1939.

¹⁸⁰ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 483.

From 1938 to the early 1940, the WAC Liaison Committee assisted with the development of the WAC networks and branches in the wartime capital. Remaining a pivotal platform for idea exchange and cooperation among women activists from different political parties and factions, the WAC also established contacts with 258 women's organisations and groups across the country by 1940.¹⁸¹ Despite the inevitable ruptures and difficulties facing the émigré women in Chongqing, WAC leaders Song Meiling, Deng Yingchao, Shi Liang and Liu Qingyang still managed to adapt their agendas to the new social, cultural and political space in hinterland in order to reconstitute women's organisations and to continue their resistance activities. With their efforts, the WAC Liaison Committee played an important role in encouraging women's participation in the constitutionalist movement and bridging the KMT side and the CCP side in women's mobilisation.

Networking between the KMT and the CCP

Despite the effort made by Song Meiling at the Lushan Women's Summit to reinforce a women's United Front for national resistance, it did not take long for internal conflicts and antagonisms to develop between the two competing political sides within the WAC. Although the fortnightly joint meetings held among the WAC and local women's organisations strengthened women intellectuals' connections between the national level and the local level, to enhance their cooperation between the KMT side and the CCP side was a more difficult task for women leaders of the WAC Liaison Committee. Song Meiling, the chief director of the WAC and Deng Yingchao, the female leader of the CCP South Bureau both intended to use the Liaison Committee as a medium to extend their influence on a wide range of local audience. Ever since they had settled down in Chongqing, the two prominent women leaders competed for social and political resources within the WAC, hoping to lead

¹⁸¹ Shi Liang, "Quanguo funü zuzhi xianzhuang yu wojian" [The Current Situation of Chinese Women's Organisations and My Opinion], *Women's Life* Vol. 8 Issue 10 (1940), source from the *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 454.

women's forums, seminars and events in the wartime capital, and to increase their personal charm and political influence.

In March 1939, in order to organise the first Women's Day celebration since the WAC had moved to Chongqing, the WAC Liaison Committee called a joint meeting amongst all local women's organisations and groups. At the meeting, Deng Yingchao proposed to organise a women's gathering to celebrate the day, as she argued, "At the moment only upper-class women intellectuals were active in national institutions and women's organisations, it would be necessary to mobilise women from all institutions, factories and schools in Chongqing to celebrate Women's Day together." However, Chen Yiyun and Tang Guozhen from the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee challenged Deng's proposal, while they insisted on organising a "patriotic donation" to encourage women to support the government and the Nationalist army financially.¹⁸²

For women leaders from the CCP South Bureau, this kind of "patriotic donation" organised by KMT women's groups was no different from a political show put on by the rich wives of KMT officials who could contribute nothing other than money. In Shi Liang's opinion, KMT women leaders were simply so afraid of the masses that they had to argue against every mass mobilisation, even when it was just for a "Women's Day" celebration.¹⁸³ The KMT leader Tang Guozhen, who never had seen eye to eye with the committee director Shi Liang, found it difficult to compromise her ideas to agree with Deng Yingchao, the most high-profiled communist leader in the WAC.

The different voices and opinions within the WAC soon led to an impasse in the heated discussion. The WAC Liaison Committee had to call for a vote to make the final decision. To reconcile the two competing sides, Shi Liang eventually accepted both of the proposals from the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee and from the CCP South Bureau. On the day, the CCP South Bureau organised a women's gathering and parade in the name of the WAC, which attracted about 4,000 to 5,000 women from different social classes and

¹⁸² *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 490.

¹⁸³ Shi, *Shi Liang zishu*, 48.

professions.¹⁸⁴ At the same time, the WAC and the NARC organised a “patriotic donation” as proposed by KMT women leaders. The donation also proved to be a big success that women across the whole country donated more than 5 million Yuan within a few days.¹⁸⁵ With the help of Song Meiling and her personal network, local women’s organisations in Chongqing alone donated more than 600,000 Yuan in one day.¹⁸⁶

Although the CCP often took the credit for mobilising and unifying local women’s communities in the KMT-controlled area, it is undeniable that the WAC Liaison Committee played a crucial role in bridging different political sides and combining their ideas and agendas to boost local women’s movements. Shi Liang, as the director of the WAC Liaison Committee, was undoubtedly the linchpin in this women’s network across different political parties and groups in Chongqing. However, Shi Liang’s neutral position within the WAC did not protect her from challenges and complaints. Not long after the Women’s Day celebration, Tang Guozhen complained at the 26th Conference of the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee, “I understand that Ms. Shi Liang wants to maintain a joint office for women from all walks of life in Chongqing, which, I have rejected; and here I hope to call your attention just in case this matter is brought up again in the future.”¹⁸⁷

It is unclear why the KMT women’s leader Tang Guozhen rejected the idea of maintaining a joint office among local women’s organisations in Chongqing, but it is certain that the ongoing subtle power balance between the KMT side and the CCP side made it an uneasy job

¹⁸⁴ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 490.

¹⁸⁵ Xia, *Fun ü zhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 223-224.

¹⁸⁶ The exact amount of donation in Chongqing was recorded to be “610,000” in Deng Yingchao’s report “Kangri minzu tongyi zhanxian zhongde funü yundong” [Women’s Movements under the Anti-Japanese National United-Front], September 1939, *Zhongguo fun ü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 168; and “more than 700,000” in Shi Liang’s report “Quanguo funü zuzhi xianzhuang yu wojian” [The Current Situation of Chinese Women’s Organisations and My Opinion], *Zhongguo fun ü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 455.

¹⁸⁷ “Zhongguo guomindang zhongyangzhixing weiyuanhui fun ü yundong weiyuanhui di ershilu ci huiyijilu” [The Meeting Minutes of the 26th Conference of the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee], 15 March 1939, source from *Zhongguo fun ü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)* [*Historical Documents of Women’s Movements—the Republican Government 1912-1949 Volume 1&2*] (the No. 2 National Historical Archives and the ACWF Institute of Women’s Study, 2011), 603.

for some influential women intellectuals like Shi Liang to hold their non-partisan position,¹⁸⁸ especially when both of the two sides tried to win them over. Song Meiling and Deng Yingchao both made great effort to develop good personal and working relationships with these non-partisan members. Deng Yingchao and her communist colleagues invited the “progressive” members of the WAC to visit No. 50 Zengjiayan, the headquarters of the CCP South Bureau in Chongqing. And they built good personal relations with YWCA leaders Zhang Aizhen and Chen Jiye, who were both director-generals of the WAC and close friends of Song Meiling. On the other side, Song Meiling offered “political career” to attract women intellectuals who were still hesitating to take sides in the early 1940s. Once at the lunch table when Chiang Kai-shek was present, Song directly invited Shi Liang to “join the KMT, bring in some new blood to the party and make some reforms.”¹⁸⁹ Song also tried to persuade Shen Zijiu, Liu Qingyang and Guo Jian to become special KMT members but they all managed to reject Song’s offer in different ways.¹⁹⁰

Notwithstanding their secret contests against each other to allure the greatest talents, both sides still managed to develop the WAC as a cross-party political framework based on mutual understanding and common goals. Leading the WAC as a national women’s organisation for national resistance, Song Meiling believed that solidarity and harmony among members were more important than power balance between different political sides. Song appreciated the working skills of Liu Qingyang and Guo Jian therefore trusted them to lead the WAC Training Department, regardless of the rumour that the two were both “undercover communists”.¹⁹¹ As Liu Qingyang remembered, Song Meiling even distanced herself from the C.C. Clique to be able to persuade more women intellectuals to work for the WAC. Song once said to Liu that “as long as we can train more women leaders to work for national

¹⁸⁸ Here “non-partisans” refers to intellectuals who did not join either of the two major parties, namely the KMT and the CCP, but who might have joined minor political parties and groups such as the NSA.

¹⁸⁹ Shi, *Shi Liang zishu*, 50.

¹⁹⁰ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 494.

¹⁹¹ Shen Zijiu, “Huiyi funü datuanjie” [The Memory of Women’s Unification], *Dazhong Shenghuo* [Public Life] No.5 (1941): 108.

resistance, Chen Lifu and his people [the C.C. Clique] cannot bother us.”¹⁹² With respect to Song Meiling’s political stance, Shi Liang made such comment: “sometimes we [non-KMT members] had fierce arguments with KMT members, but Song Meiling remained neutral herself and seldom intervened with her opinion.”¹⁹³

Using the WAC as a cross-party political platform, Song Meiling reinforced her leadership over women’s organisations and groups in Chongqing. Deng Yingchao and her colleagues from the CCP South Bureau also benefited from this cross-party political platform; they successfully established political relations and personal linkages both at national and local levels. More important, bridging the KMT side and the CCP side within the WAC, women intellectuals who were affiliated with the minor political parties grew to be the actual leaders of the women’s movement in wartime Chongqing, with their efforts devoted to promoting political democracy and constitutional governance. When the émigré intellectuals in Chongqing initiated a constitutionalist movement in 1939, women leaders and members of the WAC quickly got involved. And through this movement, they tried to develop their political networks cross party lines and the geo-political boundaries between the KMT-controlled areas, the CCP-controlled areas and the Japanese occupied areas.

“A thunderbolt out of a clear sky”

“National resistance” stimulated the elitist sense of mission and responsibility in China but it certainly did not curtail Chinese intellectuals’ political initiatives and autonomy. Mainly propelled by democratic intellectuals in Chongqing, the constitutionalist movement was aimed to urge the Nationalist government to terminate political tutelage and realise constitutional governance during the War. Although the movement spread widely and even influenced the CCP-controlled areas, the majority of participants remained prominent

¹⁹² Liu Qingyang, “Huiyi xinyun funü zhidao weiyuanhui xunlianzu” [My Memory of the WAC Training Group], 1964, source from *Wuhan wenshi ziliao* [Wuhan Cultural and Historical Materials] 08 (2005): 59-60.

¹⁹³ Shi, *Shi Liang zishu*, 50.

intellectuals and social elites in Chongqing. Edmund Fung has pointed out the contribution made by wartime intellectuals, in particular those who affiliated with the minor political parties and groups, toward the promotion of constitutionalism in wartime Chongqing.¹⁹⁴ Women leaders of the WAC, as Xia Rong's research shows, also actively participated in the constitutionalist movement.¹⁹⁵ However, it was unclear how women intellectuals from different political backgrounds enhanced their communication and cooperation during the movement. More important, it was unknown how the circulation of ideas on constitutionalism and democracy enlarged the space for women's political participation and strengthened their political networks beyond the geo-political boundaries between the KMT-controlled areas, the CCP base areas and the Japanese occupied areas.

One of the most important political platforms for the development of this elite-led movement was the People's Political Council. On 15 September 1939, the fourth conference of the first PPC council was called in Chongqing to discuss the seven proposals from the KMT, the CCP, the NSA, the Youth Party, the National Socialist Party, the Third Party and the Vocational Education Society. The conference passed the resolution to urge the government to call the National Assembly and to promulgate the constitution. Chiang Kai-shek therefore formed a Constitutional Promotion Committee under the PPC (宪政期成会) as the official organisation to supervise the promulgation of the constitution. The famous journalist and NSA member Zou Taofen vividly described the atmosphere of the conference:

From 8pm until 2:30am, fierce debates about the seven proposals continued for more than six hours and left no time for anyone to take a breath. Delegates from different parties kept standing up to make their arguments; the enthusiasm showed for constitutional governance was unprecedented [...] This conference, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, triggered the constitutionalist movement.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Edmund S.K. Fung, *In Search of Chinese Democracy: Civil Opposition in Nationalist China, 1929-1949* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 166-179.

¹⁹⁵ Xia, *Fun üzhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 244-249.

¹⁹⁶ Wen Liming, "Kangzhan shiqi faqi diyici xianzhengyundong de yiduan neimu" [Some inside Information about the Beginning of the constitutionalist movement during the War of Resistance], *Bainianchao* [Tide of the Century] 01 (2005), 76.

Shi Liang, as one of the few female PPC delegates who experienced this “thunderbolt out of a clear sky” in China’s political history, was elected to be the only female member of the total 25 in the Constitutional Promotion Committee, as well as the only female member in the standing committee of the PPC.¹⁹⁷ After Shi Liang moved to Chongqing, she suspended her professional career as a lawyer and dedicated most of her time to the PPC. She had proposed to elect at least one or two women delegates into the standing committee of the PPC, thus to ensure women’s participation in all PPC policy-making and decision-making processes. Her political status as a PPC standing committee member hence allowed her to represent women in the most privileged political circles of Chongqing and to participate in discussions on urgent national affairs.

More important, her professional political career at the PPC did not separate Shi Liang from her women’s networks, rather it allowed her to focus on educating and mobilising women with solid institutional support. After the Sixth Plenary Session of the KMT Fifth Congress had passed the PPC resolution to convoke the National Assembly on 12 November 1940 and to promulgate the constitution, the constitutionalist movement was getting in full swing in Chongqing.¹⁹⁸ Shi Liang therefore took the perfect timing to encourage women’s political participation. From November 1939 to April 1940, she organised seven women’s constitutional forums (妇女宪政座谈会), prepared women’s workshops and research seminars, and invited women activists from different political parties to give speeches or to join the discussions.

Organised at Qiujiing Middle School, where the WAC headquarters was located, the seven women’s constitutional forums not only brought together women intellectuals from different political parties and groups for discussions, but also attracted students from local colleges and universities to audit.¹⁹⁹ More than 100 women intellectuals and activists participated in the first forum together with women representatives sent from the WAC, the Chongqing branch

¹⁹⁷ Zhou and Sun, *Shi Liang*, 189-190.

¹⁹⁸ The National Assembly scheduled for 12 November 1940 was postponed again due to the War. Please see Fung, *In Search of Chinese Democracy*, 204.

¹⁹⁹ Invitation letter from the WAC for women’s constitutional forums, 7 December, 1939, Chongqing Municipal Archives (CMA), 0122-0005-0004, 14-15.

of Chinese Women's Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance, the delegation of the women's association at the Shaan-Gan-Ning border areas (陕甘宁边区妇女代表团),²⁰⁰ the KMT Chongqing Municipal Women's Community (重庆市妇女会) and another 23 local women's organisations and groups.²⁰¹

These forums brought joy and hope to women intellectuals in the wartime capital during the gloomy winter of 1939. Participants were excited to learn what "constitutional governance" could mean to women and to the nation's future. Because of her legal knowledge as a lawyer and her special political position as a PPC delegate, the director of the WAC Liaison Committee Shi Liang chaired the first women's constitutional forum and shared her experience as a delegate at the fourth conference of the first PPC council. She also drafted the following agenda for women's discussions on constitutional governance:

Discussion 1: What is "constitutional governance"?

What is the relation between the constitution and constitutional governance?

How do women become candidates to be elected for the National Assembly?

Which type of constitution is needed in China?

Introduction to the organic law and electoral law.

Discussion 2: What is the relation between "national resistance" and constitutionalism?

Will the implementation of the constitution impair national resistance?

Will the implementation of the constitution increase disputes between political parties?

How do we apply the "Three People's Principles" of Sun Yat-sen to national resistance and reconstruction?

²⁰⁰ The members of the delegation of the women's association at the Shaan-Gan-Ning border areas were also members of the women's committee of the CCP South Bureau, namely Zhang Xiaomei, Zhang Yuqin, Liao Siguang and Deng Yingchao who were based in the wartime capital since 1939.

²⁰¹ *Xinyun funü zhidao weiyuanhui gongzuo banian*, 200; "Xianzheng yu funü" [Constitutional Governance and Women], *Zhongyang Ribao*, 12 November, 1939; "Chongqing ershiqi funü tuanti relie taolun xianzheng" [27 Women's Organisations in Passionate Discussion of Constitutional Governance], *Xinhua Ribao*, 13 November, 1939.

Discussion 3: Have women reached the level of education and morality to participate in the constitutional governance?

Discussion 4: How should women promote the constitution?

How to exchange ideas at women's constitutional forums (which should be called fortnightly)?

How to organise talks and seminars?

How to establish research societies and study groups?

How to contribute more articles on constitutional governance?

How to spread the knowledge of constitutional governance to relatives and friends?

Table 5. Agenda for the women's constitutional forums²⁰²

Judging from the agenda, women intellectuals in Chongqing not only participated in the constitutionalist movement, but more important, they sought to integrate their feminist and suffragist ideas into their agenda for promoting constitutionalism in order to increase women's representation in national politics. As Edwards has argued, buoyed by their success with promoting the constitution during the Nanjing decade (1927-1936), women suffrage activists remained enthusiastic about participation in politics during the wartime period, despite the evident reluctance of the Nationalist government to hold elections.²⁰³ And indeed, many women intellectuals who were involved in the constitutionalist movement during the War, such as Tang Guozhen from the KMT, Shi Liang from the NSA and Deng Yingchao from the CCP had been firm supporters of women's suffrage in the Nanjing decade. Stressing the correlation between national resistance, constitutionalism and women's political participation, these women leaders managed to continue the women's movement in the specific political space of wartime Chongqing.

With the above agenda agreed by all women attendees, the women's constitutional forum began with its first discussion on "what is constitutional governance". Liu Qingyang and Han Youtong from the NSA, Zhang Xiaomei and Liao Siguang from the CCP South Bureau, Chen

²⁰² "Chongqing funü tuixing xianzheng yundong ganyan" [Comments on the Women's Constitutionalist Movement in Chongqing], *Women's Life* Vol. 8 Issue 5 (1939).

²⁰³ Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy*, 193.

Yiyun, Zhu Lun, Tang Guozhen and Huang Peilan from the KMT all contributed their opinions on the topic. Liu Qingyang pointed out that “constitutional governance could only be achieved in a democratic political system.” Chen Yiyun believed that “constitutional governance is the governance by the people.” While Han Youtong added, “the constitutional governance in China should comply with the ‘Three People’s Principles’ of Sun Yat-sen.” Liu Qingyang further suggested that the women’s quota at the National Assembly should be no lower than 30 percent so as to guarantee women’s participation in constitutional governance. And Huang Peilan proposed to establish a women’s constitutional promotion association to mobilise more women to participate in the constitutionalist movement.²⁰⁴

Following the seven constitutional forums, on 6 April 1940 the WAC organised a reception to introduce women delegates of the PPC to local women’s groups and organisations in Chongqing. All of the ten women delegates of the first People’s Political Council except for Liu-Wang Liming and Yu Weihua attended the reception.²⁰⁵ Han Youtong reported the uneasy progress made by local women’s organisations and groups in the constitutionalist movement. PPC delegates Shi Liang (from the NSA), Liu Hengjing (from the KMT) and Dr. Wu Yifang (non-partisan) also gave their talks. Just returned from her trip in the Soviet Union, CCP delegate Deng Yingchao shared her new knowledge of Soviet women’s political life, and encouraged the present women activists to review Chinese women’s political participation during the War in the international context.²⁰⁶

With the NSA networks both growing inside of the WAC and integrating into the broader democratic forces during the constitutionalist movement, women intellectuals from the minor political parties and groups began to play a leading role in women’s political engagement at the national level, notwithstanding their hesitant political identification with the two major parties. Shi Liang, Shen Ziji, Liu Qingyang, Cao Mengjun, Luo Shuzhang and Han Youtong were not only active members of the NSA, prominent leaders and close colleagues in the

²⁰⁴ “Chongqing ershiqi funü tuanti relie taolun xianzheng”.

²⁰⁵ Liu-Wang was absent for the reason of work, Yu was assassinated in 1938.

²⁰⁶ “Yushi ge funü tuanti zhaodai nücanzhengyuan” [Women’s Organisations in Chongqing Held a Reception for Women Delegates of the PPC], *Xinhua Ribao*, 7 April, 1939.

WAC, but also the keynote speakers and promoters of the seven women's constitutional forums.

It is noticeable that the chairs of the seven forums were all from the WAC, and more important, all of them were politically affiliated with the minor political parties and groups rather than appointed by the two major parties. Apart from Shi Liang who chaired the first, second and the fourth forums, Liu Qingyang, the NSA leader and the director of the WAC Training Department chaired the third and the fifth forums, and another two NSA leaders Luo Shuzhang and Han Youtong chaired the sixth and seventh forums respectively.²⁰⁷ Women leaders from the CCP South Bureau and the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee all participated in the forums, but it was women intellectuals from the minor political parties and groups who decided the agenda, dominated the discussions and organised the events during the constitutionalist movement. Instead of responding to the call of "national resistance" by becoming either a Nationalist or a communist, women intellectuals in Chongqing adopted different political roles and developed broad networks to realise "resistance", "democracy", "constitutionalism" and "women's political participation" as the closely related facets of the same political goal.

In view of this, the constitutionalist movement between 1939 and 1940 stimulated the further expansion and connection of women intellectuals' political networks, not only in terms of their political exchange cross different political parties, but also in terms of the wider political themes and topics they engaged with. The seven women's constitutional forums went beyond the ideology of "national resistance" in a state/party dimension. And the WAC, as a cross-party communication framework for women, was reinforced through the movement initiated by wartime democratic intellectuals who were from different political backgrounds and held different political ideas. For women intellectuals who participated in this movement, "national resistance" was no longer the propaganda of either the KMT or the CCP to boost mass mobilisation, but an integral part of the ongoing process in which women recognised their political roles and responsibilities, circulated their political ideas and

²⁰⁷ Xia, *Fun ü zhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 244-246.

networks, and more important, defended their social and political independence not only from a patriarchal family, but also from any patriarchal state/party mechanism.

The problem of reaching out to the “lower-class masses”(下层群众)

The constitutionalist movement saw the recovery and enhancement of women intellectuals’ political communication in the wartime capital, but the spaces for women’s political participation in wartime China were not, in most cases, class blind. Although women intellectuals’ political networks had grown nationwide and reached out to various national and local political institutions through the constitutionalist movement, they were still maintained by the same style of communication through forums, seminars, reading/research societies, casual social events, writings and publications. This means that personal bonds and social linkages based on their similar education and class background remained crucial to women intellectuals’ political networking both at national and local levels.

With approximately 100 attendees representing 23 women’s organisations and groups, the first women’s constitutional forum in Chongqing was covered in *Xinhua Ribao* as “a major event of the ongoing constitutionalist movement”.²⁰⁸ The number of participant organisations in the second forum increased to 33 while the number of women attendees tripled to over 300. However in the third and fourth forums, the number of women participants soon decreased to around 200 and it dropped again to around 100 in the last forum in late March 1940.²⁰⁹ The scale of these forums indicates that women’s participation in the constitutionalist movement was still limited to the small society of prominent women intellectuals, as pointed out by *Xinhua Ribao*, “the movement needs to be gradually introduced to the lower-class masses by the upper-class women intellectuals.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ “Funü yu xianzheng yundong” [Women and the Constitutionalist Movement], *Xinhua Ribao*, 13 November, 1939.

²⁰⁹ Xia, *Fun üzhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 244-246.

²¹⁰ “Funü yu xianzheng yundong”.

However, differences in class and education resulted in the disparity between prominent women intellectuals and the less educated rural and working-class women, who were commonly referred to as lower-class or ordinary women (下层或一般妇女) at the time. The women intellectuals in Chongqing, to a large extent, struggled in a similar ambiguous situation which French intellectuals experienced in resistance: they were challenging the bourgeois order but were also depending on the very order economically and professionally.²¹¹ Economically and professionally superior to most rural and working-class women, women intellectuals in Chongqing could afford the time and cost to attend women's forums, private meetings and parties in order to keep and refresh their contacts. Like in Shanghai where they held their get-togethers at the Godly restaurant, in Chongqing they met regularly at the Club of Chinese Students Returned from France, Belgium & Switzerland (中法比瑞同学会), located on Shangshiban Street close to the Linjiang Gate. Sometimes it was for talks and seminars given by famous scholars, otherwise it was simply for small-scale parties to bring old friends together and to meet new ones.²¹² This style of communication was exclusive to women intellectuals from a good educational and economic background and therefore made it even more difficult for reaching out to lower-class or ordinary women.

As a result, the development of women intellectuals' networks through the constitutionalist movement in Chongqing did not lead to a significant increase in the membership of rural and working-class women; neither did this elite-led movement evolve into a mass movement that could influence both urban and rural areas in wartime China. It proved to be extremely difficult if not impossible for these prominent women intellectuals to connect more broadly with the "masses" they would like to engage with. As shown in the working agenda of the WAC Liaison Committee, women intellectuals in Chongqing had emphasised the mobilisation of women from a lower class during the War, but the achievements were limited due to the way of their communication and networking. Shi Liang mentioned the problems

²¹¹ Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, 32.

²¹² The meeting minutes of the 33th women's forum in Chongqing, 9 December, 1940, CMA, 0053-0004-00170, 43-45; Invitation letter for Zhang Naiqi's talk, 18 May, 1940, CMA, 0296-0013-00211, 13-14.

and difficulties facing women intellectuals when they tried to enhance their connections with the “masses” in 1940:

Ever since Chongqing became the wartime capital, the dormant forces of women were awakened. The number of women’s organisations and groups in the city increased from 3 to 38 within a year and the connection between these groups became stronger since last 8 March celebration. Joint meetings and women’s constitutional forums were organised every other week to enhance the communication between different women’s organisation [...] However, we can clearly feel the lack of connections between our women’s organisations and the masses. Many women elites joined women’s organisations and groups because of their desire for power and leadership, therefore their passion for work could not last long without caring for the real needs of the masses. Some other women members were persuaded by their friends to join for the sake of social contacts, thus they only held nominal positions in the organisation. Due to the lack of personnel to take the leadership and do some real work, our ties with new members and with the masses have been very weak.²¹³

Although KMT women members were often blamed for their fear of the “masses”, it is undeniable that even women activists from the CCP and the minor political parties felt the problem of breaking through the class barrier between elite women and the so-called lower-class women in Chongqing. As pointed out in chapter 1, the urban spaces and intellectual circles in cities like Shanghai, Wuhan and Chongqing were essential to women intellectuals’ communication and networking, therefore political participation of the less educated rural and working-class women in the constitutionalist movement was inevitably restricted by the boundaries of class and education.

Through advocating national resistance, democracy and constitutionalism, women intellectuals in Chongqing not only attempted to develop their movement among the “masses”, but also sought to expand and connect their networks across party lines and the geo-political boundaries between the KMT-controlled areas and the CCP base areas. As the

²¹³ Shi, “Quanguo funü zuzhi xianzhuang yu wojian”.

constitutionalist movement quickly spread to other unoccupied cities such as Chengdu, Xi'an, Guiyang, Yan'an and Hong Kong, women's constitutional forums became a special channel for women intellectuals to exchange political ideas, strengthen personal connections and to synchronise their actions. Therefore through the constitutionalist movement, women intellectuals who had migrated to the hinterland continued their circulation of resistance ideas and networks across the warzones and the rear areas, in the CCP border bases and the KMT-run regions, and even out of mainland China.

Networking across the wartime geo-political boundaries

Like China's frontiers in the early 1940s, the wartime borderline kept changing according to geographical, social, cultural, geopolitical and economic conditions.²¹⁴ By 1941, Japanese troops had already occupied most regions along China's east coast, making the inland provinces of central China such as Shanxi, Hunan, Hubei and Jiangxi the frontier regions. Japan supported Wang Jingwei as an alternative to Chiang Kai-shek to run the puppet regime established in Nanjing and to maintain the political order of the occupied provinces in east China. In the meantime, in the vast rural area of north and northwest China, communist border bases were rapidly developing through guerrilla wars and the CCP's experimental social and economic reforms. Yan'an became the de facto wartime capital of the communist regime. In the South, Kunming and Hong Kong, which stood strong as the shelters of Chinese intellectuals during the War, were also threatened by Japan's military manoeuvres in the Asia-Pacific. The changing geo-political landscape in the early 1940s demanded a widely extending but also tightly interconnected network to support effective communication among women intellectuals between their wartime locations in Chongqing, Yan'an, Shanghai, Kunming and Hong Kong.

²¹⁴ Hans van de Ven, "The Sino-Japanese War in History" in Mark Peattie, Edward Drea and Hans van de Ven eds., *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 461.

The constitutionalist movement in 1940 significantly expedited the network development among Chinese women intellectuals. Historian Chen Zhongping has noted that the modern commercial networks in China achieved regional and national connections through socio-political movements in the early twentieth century such as the anti-American Boycott of 1905.²¹⁵ Women intellectuals also achieved regional and national connections of their political networks through the constitutionalist movement. In January 1940, less than two months after Shi Liang had organised the first women's constitutional forum in Chongqing, the Yan'an Women's Constitutional Promotion Association (延安妇女界宪政促进会) was established. The objectives, structure and membership of the association were detailed in its charter, which was published in *Chinese Women* (*Zhongguo fun ü 中国妇女*), one of the CCP women's journals circulated in Yan'an:

Our aim: the association calls on progressive women of all parties, factions and classes across the nation to help the government promulgate the constitution. The association urges the government to guarantee equal positions and all democratic rights of Chinese women in politics, in education and in society, and to firmly achieve the national resistance and reconstruction.

Our work:

1. to explain the significance of constitutional governance, and to mobilise women from all classes to take part in the constitutionalist movement,
2. to conduct research and to publish relevant articles on journals and newspapers regularly and to print pamphlets of the association when necessary,
3. to listen to women of different classes, and to report our research results to the PPC Constitutional Promotion Committee and to the National Assembly (to be summoned),
4. to maintain close connection with other women's associations for promoting the constitution,
5. to encourage the establishment of women's organisations for promoting the constitution

²¹⁵ Chen, *Modern China's Network Revolution*, 109-119.

in other regions, and to widely introduce the constitutionalist movement across the country.²¹⁶

It is apparent that the Women's Constitutional Promotion Association in Yan'an shared the same political goals with the women's constitutional forums in Chongqing. Women intellectuals in Yan'an and those in Chongqing used the same political terms such as "national resistance and reconstruction" (抗战建国) and "constitutional promotion/constitutional expectation" (宪政促进/宪政期成) to integrate local women's movement into the national political reform for "resistance" and "constitutional governance". In addition, the same high expectation on the People's Political Council and the hitherto "to-be-summoned" National Assembly was expressed by women intellectuals in both cities, which further indicates the exchange of political information among women intellectuals across the geo-political boundaries between Chongqing and Yan'an. The only noticeable difference is, while the forum agenda in Chongqing emphasised the exchange of ideas among prominent women intellectuals, the charter in Yan'an manifested strong interest in the participation of women from all social classes and the nationwide mobilisation of women through the constitutionalist movement.

Not long after the Yan'an Women's Constitutional Promotion Association had been established, a second association was formed in the CCP Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei border area (晋察冀边区) to respond to Yan'an's call for spreading the constitutionalist movement across the country.²¹⁷ In the KMT-controlled areas, the women's constitutional forums were also introduced to other unoccupied cities. The KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community (国民党云南省妇女会) organised talks and seminars on the topic of "women

²¹⁶ "Yan'an funüjie xianzheng cujinhui jianzhang" [The Brief Charter of Yan'an Women's Constitutional Promotion Association], *Chinese Women* Vol. 1 Issue 9 (1940), source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 293-294.

²¹⁷ "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu gejie funüxianzheng cujinhui chengli" [The Establishment of Women's Constitutional Promotion Association at the Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Border Areas], *Kangdi Bao*, 22 July, 1940, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 325-326.

and the constitution” in Kunming, and invited all local female staff working at government institutions and female students in universities to attend.²¹⁸

While women intellectuals built connections between the KMT-controlled areas and the CCP base areas to promote constitutionalism and democracy, communist women leaders in Yan'an also reinforced their political ties with left-wing KMT leaders in Hong Kong. As a result of the political networking among women leaders and prominent women elites such as Song Qingling, He Xiangning and Deng Yingchao, women intellectuals' political pursuit for resistance and democracy was no longer confined to mainland China. On 8 March, a letter was posted from Yan'an to Song Qingling and He Xiangning in Hong Kong, offering them honorary positions in the newly founded Women's Constitutional Association in Yan'an. It was stated in the letter that:

The War of Resistance has been going on for two years, but until today, due to our Chinese traditions in the past, women's political and legal rights have not yet been realised [...] In order to promote constitutionalist movement among women in the border areas and to establish connections with women activists across the country, we have founded the Yan'an Women's Constitutional Association. Now women in Yan'an and in all the border areas are expecting your leadership and guidance!²¹⁹

Ended with the “salute to democracy” (民主的敬礼), this letter certainly delivered a message from Yan'an to Hong Kong as well as to Chongqing that, in terms of promoting democracy and constitutionalism, we communist women not only speak the same political language but also share the same political enthusiasm with women activists elsewhere.

The question is, if this letter signified the political intention of the communists to extend their high-level political networks among women leaders, why was it sent to Hong Kong instead of to Chongqing? I argue that the reasons are the following three: First of all,

²¹⁸ *Yunnan shengzhi* 54 [The Local Chronicle of Yunnan Province Vol. 54] (Yunnan Renmin Press, 1998), 13.

²¹⁹ “Yan'an funüjie xianzheng cujinhui zhi Song Qingling He Xiangning xiansheng han” [The Letter from Yan'an Women's Constitutional Promotion Association to Song Meiling and He Xiangning], *Jiefang* 101(1940), source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao* (1937-1945), 295-296.

women's political connection between Yan'an and Chongqing had already been established by communist women leaders who were active inside of the WAC. As the following chapters will show, Deng Yingchao and her colleagues at the CCP South Bureau also developed undercover communist networks within local women's organisations and groups in Chongqing. Second, compared with approaching Song Meiling in Chongqing who by all means supported Chiang Kai-shek's political interest, approaching left-wing KMT leaders Song Qingling and He Xiangning would be politically more beneficial for the CCP's "unite-front framework", which was aimed at winning support from democratic intellectuals and strengthening a civil opposition against the KMT right wing. Third, to bring Song Qingling and He Xiangning on board would further improve CCP's relations with the KMT left wing in Chongqing, which later proved to be important in protecting and recovering women intellectuals' cross-party networks after the New Fourth Army Incident.

Song Qingling and He Xiangning, the recipients of this letter, had both moved to Hong Kong after the War broke out and stayed there until the fall of Hong Kong in 1941. During this period they were both committed to the work of the China Defence League (保卫中国同盟). Using their broad political and personal ties, they spread the news of wartime China overseas in order to seek international support to China's resistance.²²⁰ They also mobilised Hong Kong women to unite with women in other countries who were also fighting an anti-Fascist war. In her speech at Hong Kong women's gathering on Women's Day in 1939, Song Qingling positioned Chinese women at the frontline of an anti-Fascist war fighting shoulder by shoulder with Spanish women. She promised the world that Chinese women would continue fighting until they won their democracy and freedom.²²¹

The People's Political Council is the first step we take towards parliamentary democracy and we have seen many women delegates participating in it. Our women have become prominent national leaders despite their different social classes. Led by these great figures

²²⁰ Cindy Yik-yi Chu, *Chinese Communists and Hong Kong Capitalists: 1937-1997* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 30.

²²¹ The Speech by Song Qingling at the gathering for the International Women's Day in Hong Kong, 8 March, 1939, source from *Zhongguo fun ü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 243-247.

of the time, millions of Chinese women are contributing to the nation's history [...] This is what our people and our women have done for the War of Resistance. The War of Resistance is also our war to fight against international violence, against Fascism, and our war to fight for democracy and for women's rights.²²²

Women intellectuals' communication and networking during the constitutionalist movement, in this sense, went beyond geo-political boundaries and beyond any state/party rhetoric of "national resistance". When these women intellectuals fought for democracy and constitutionalism, for women's political and legal rights, as well as for women's part in national resistance but also in an international war against Fascism, their political engagement was no longer confined to the socio-political condition of wartime China. Instead, their political participation manifested the dynamics of war, politics and gender in a transnational scope, far beyond the socio-political pathology of "China's past". Moreover, during this period, women intellectuals' political movement was institutionalised through their participation in the WAC, the PPC, the *Tongzhihui* and other wartime political organisations. Political institutions such as the PPC and the "to-be-summoned" National Assembly became as important as battlefields, therefore in terms of achieving national resistance and liberation, women's political participation was seen as crucial as men's killing the enemies. It was as Song Qingling stated in her speech, women's participation in these political institutions was already a significant triumph on their way toward democracy and freedom.

A bigger challenge

However, not every geo-political boundary was easy to overcome. Due to the warfare and the political conditions in some regions of wartime China, divisions, dislocations and loss of contacts also happened to women intellectuals' political networks. Although women intellectuals enhanced their political networks across the un-occupied territory during the

²²² Ibid, 246.

constitutionalist movement, to maintain contacts with their peers who were working in the warzones or in the Japanese-occupied areas was a bigger challenge.

On 3 March 1940, the WAC was visited by a special guest, the communist film star Chen Bo'er. Chen was invited to talk at the sixth women's constitutional forum of WAC about her one-year "expedition" across the battlefields and CCP guerrilla zones in Shanxi and Hebei.²²³ The "battlefield experience" gained by Chen Bo'er in north China, though limited, did complement women intellectuals' understanding of the responsibilities and roles for women in national resistance. Chen Bo'er had admitted to Shi Liang and Shen Zijiu in her letter that "the half of my time in Shanxi was spent on escaping the enemy and waiting [...] It is undeniable that we failed our first step [to mobilise women in the warzones]. But this failure taught us that we should not only focus on women and children, but also pay attention to the political landscape, economy and education in wartime China."²²⁴

Chen Bo'er was not a stranger to many WAC members such as Shen Zijiu, Shi Liang and Luo Shuzhang, to whom she had been a good friend and colleague in Shanghai and Wuhan. Chen left Wuhan for Yan'an in 1938 after she had joined the Communist Party, and in early 1939, she joined the "warzone investigation group" (战区考察团) and left for Shanxi to visit local women and children there. In April, after travelling across the borders of Shanxi, Chahar and Hebei for almost four months, Chen Bo'er wrote a letter to Shen Zijiu and Shi Liang to report her progress.²²⁵ However, when the letter was finally received and published by Shen Zijiu in *Women's Life*, it was already in August and Chen Bo'er was by then suspected of being missing in Hebei.²²⁶ Shen Zijiu and Chen Bo'er's friends in Chongqing were deeply concerned whether she was caught by Japanese enemies. They did not have any

²²³ Xia, *Fun üzhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 246.

²²⁴ "Chen Bo'er cong zhendi de laixin" [Chen Bo'er's Letter from the Battlefield], *Women's Life* Vol.8 Issue 1 (1939): 10.

²²⁵ "Chen Bo'er cong zhendi de laixin", 10-11.

²²⁶ The comment made by Shen Zijiu on Chen Bo'er letter, *Women's Life* Vol.8 Issue 1 (1939): 11.

news about her until in December it was confirmed that she had already safely entered Sichuan with her “warzone investigation group” and would arrive in Chongqing soon.²²⁷

The sixth women’s constitutional forum, in this sense, was rather a friends’ reunion than a political meeting to welcome back a war heroine. Chen Bo’er’s experience shows that, because of mail postage delays and the lack of other means of communications, it was difficult for women intellectuals in Chongqing and those in the warzones to keep frequent communication. However, Chen’s conversion to communism and her departure from the WAC in 1938 due to the manoeuvres of different political parties did not result in the loss of contact between her and her friends who remained within the WAC. Their reunion in 1940 Chongqing during the constitutionalist movement demonstrates the resilience of women intellectuals’ networks during the War. Women intellectuals such as Shen Zijiu, Shi Liang and Chen Bo’er were socially bonded in friendships and personal relations, and politically connected if not united for their common pursuit of resistance, democracy and constitutionalism. Their interconnected personal and working relations, therefore, enabled the continuity and flexibility in their networking from 1937 to 1940.

Another challenge facing women intellectuals during the War was how to maintain liaison with their peers in the Japanese occupied regions, especially with those who stayed in Shanghai. The geo-political barrier between the unoccupied hinterland and the occupied east China caused some tenacious divisions and isolations to women intellectuals’ political networks during the War. As the economic and cultural centre and a hub of foreign trade in east China, Shanghai had seen a variety of commercial, social and political networks burgeoning in the early twentieth century, but the occupation of the city by Japanese affected the development of these local networks, societies and non-governmental organisations. Parks M. Coble has pointed out that the array of non-governmental organisations emerging in the 1930s Shanghai was a relatively new phenomenon in China but one which would not last—the outbreak of war in 1937 and the occupation by Japan of the Chinese city (and the

²²⁷ “Chen Bo’er anran wuyang” [Chen Bo’er Is Safe], *Women’s Life* Vol.8 Issue 7 (1940): 20.

international settlement in December 1941) was the beginning of the end [in terms of their development in Shanghai].²²⁸

Local women intellectuals' networks in Shanghai were also undermined during the Japanese occupation of the city. After Shanghai fell and became an "orphan island" (孤島), many prominent women intellectuals left for Wuhan, Changsha, Guangzhou and Hong Kong to continue their resistance networks and activities. When Shen Ziju left Shanghai in late 1937, her friends who decided to stay promised that they would continue resistance so that "when the enemies swallow up our city, it would be the same that they swallow a bomb."²²⁹ However, to maintain an active network in occupied Shanghai was not as easy as Shen Ziju's friends had expected. According to *Shanghai Women* (*Shanghai funü* 上海妇女), many women quitted their resistance organisation and hid themselves in foreign concessions. Feeling endangered or ambushed every minute, they eventually became too paranoid to do anything but to squander their time in leisure.²³⁰ Some previous women leaders became collaborators after the fall of Shanghai. It was reported by *Women's Life* that, Jin Guangmei, the head of Shanghai Women's Benevolent Society (上海妇女救济会) and the education director of Wuben Girls' Middle School, was involved with Ding Mocun and Li Shiqun, two of the most infamous collaborators serving at Wang Jingwei's secret agency in Shanghai, well-known as the No.76 Jessfield Road (or 76 号 in Chinese for short).²³¹

However, the occupation of Shanghai did not result in the termination of local women intellectuals' organisations. After He Xiangning and Shi Liang had left Shanghai, Xu Guangping, the widow of the famous writer Lu Xun, and Huang Dinghui took over the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Women's Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance, and changed its name to "Association for Refugee Relief" to hide the

²²⁸ Coble, "The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai", 117.

²²⁹ Shen, "Wo zouchu le Shanghai", 93.

²³⁰ Tie Huai, "Yinian yilai de Shanghai funüjie" [Shanghai Women in the Past One Year], *Shanghai Women* Vol. 1 Issue 6 (1938), source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao* (1937-1945), 113-114.

²³¹ Qiao Hong, "Gudao tongxun" [News from the Orphan Island], *Women's Life* Vol. 8 Issue 1 (1939): 11.

political purposes of this organisation.²³² In this way, Xu managed to maintain connections with the remaining local women's organisations such as the previously mentioned Chinese Women's Community led by Tian Shujun, the Chinese Career Women's Club (上海职业妇女俱乐部) led by Mao Liying, and the Shanghai branches of the YWCA and the WCTU.²³³ Nonetheless, after the Pacific War had broken out and the Japanese troops had occupied the foreign concessions, women intellectuals' political activities in Shanghai became more limited and their political networks stayed underground. As will be shown in chapter 6, communication between local women intellectuals who had stayed in Shanghai during the War and those who had left for the hinterland was only resumed eight years later when the War finished.

Conclusion

Focusing on the elite-led constitutionalist movement in Chongqing, this chapter shows how women intellectuals migrated to the hinterland and tried to enhance their networks in the new geographical, cultural and political spaces. Their political movements for resistance, constitutionalism, democracy and equal political rights reflect their continuous engagement with a wide range of political structures and institutions, and with a variety of political affairs and gender issues. The fall of Wuhan and the retreat of the Nationalist government to the hinterland resulted in departures and divisions of women intellectuals' resistance networks. However, this was certainly not the end of women's political participation or organisation in a broader context. After Chongqing was made the wartime capital, those prominent women intellectuals who used to be active in east China renovated their political organisations and movements in Chongqing, Yan'an, Kunming and Hong Kong. Their political exchanges and network development across geo-political boundaries during the constitutionalist movement

²³² Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, 200.

²³³ Source from Shanghai Local History Office-Women's History, <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node64804/node64810/node64853/node64861/userobject1ai59115.html>.

further demonstrate the continuity and consistency in women's political participation before and during the War.

From the perspective of women intellectuals' political participation and networking, the National Salvation Movement in the late 1930s, the defence of Wuhan in 1938 and the constitutionalist movement in the early 1940s were a series of closely related historical events, through which women intellectuals expanded and connected their resistance networks. The constitutionalist movement further helped enlarge the spaces for women intellectuals' political participation and enhanced their communication across the wartime geo-political boundaries, during which women intellectuals reinterpreted and shared the principles of constitutionalism, democracy and women's political representation in the context of national resistance. It would not be exaggerated to argue that women leaders and elites from the minor political parties and groups, through the various political campaigns and movements during this period, grew to be the actual leaders of national women's organisations such as the WAC. Not only connecting between the national and the local, but also bridging between the KMT side and the CCP side, the broad socio-political linkages and personal ties held by these non-partisan women intellectuals, to a large extent, enabled the continuity and flexibility in women's political engagement and communication during the War.

However, "development" was only one side of the story about women intellectuals' wartime political networks. As the last section has shown, the occupation of Shanghai caused the isolation of some local women's networks during the War. And for women intellectuals who had recovered their networks in Chongqing, their political organisation and affiliation were soon to encounter a series of changes in 1941. The KMT's political persecution of communists and their sympathisers after the New Fourth Army Incident in Chongqing further resulted in the departures and dislocations of their political networks. A plausible "retrogression of the women's movement" (妇女运动的逆流) was thus noted in both historical documents and personal writings about the New Fourth Army Incident.²³⁴ The next

²³⁴ Shen Zijiu, "Kangzhan sinianlai de funü yundong" [Women's Movements for Four Years since the War of Resistance], 25 July, 1941, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 575-582.

chapter will focus on the impact of the New Fourth Army Incident on women intellectuals' political networks and I seek to examine both the discontinuities and continuities in women intellectuals' cross-party networking over this "retrogression period".

Chapter 3

In May 1941, Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao told Liu Qingyang that the WAC was no longer a safe place for her to stay after the New Fourth Army Incident, and advised her to leave Chongqing for Hong Kong. On the early morning of 9 May, Liu Qingyang took a truck with some friends doing business and left Chongqing.²³⁵ The New Fourth Army Incident,²³⁶ not only resulted in a deep crisis in the KMT-CCP United Front, but also significantly altered the spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement. From the late 1940 onwards, the deteriorating military frictions between the KMT and the CCP in central China led to the increasing political terror perpetrated by the KMT against communists in the wartime capital. The Nationalist government tightened its political control over communists, democratic intellectuals as well as students in Chongqing. Many women intellectuals like Liu Qingyang were suspected of being communists and then blacklisted by the KMT. The CCP South Bureau had to advise key CCP and NSA members to withdraw from the WAC, even to leave Chongqing. 1941 was therefore remembered by these women intellectuals as the "retrogression period" of the wartime women's movement.

The impact of the New Fourth Army Incident on women intellectuals' political networks was irreversible, especially in terms of the cross-party framework for their political engagement. How did women intellectuals react to the personnel and structural changes in the NARC and the WAC, and how could they maintain their political contacts and interactions

²³⁵ Liu, "Huiyi xinyun funü zhidao weiyuanhui xunlianzu", 4-9.

²³⁶ Also known as Wannan Incident, the New Fourth Army Incident happened in January 1941. The superior KMT forces surrounded and destroyed a column of 10,000 marchers from the New Fourth Army under Ye Ting and Xiang Ying near Maolin. Historians from the PRC and the POC have different views on the cause of the Incident. For more information, please see Gregor Benton, *New Fourth Army: communist Resistance along the Yangtze and the Huai, 1938-1941* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 511.

with decreasing political and institutional supports in Chongqing? If as Rana Mitter has argued, the New Fourth Army Incident was to prove a major turning point in the upward rise of the fortunes of the CCP, then what did the Incident mean to women intellectuals' political identification with the KMT and with the CCP?²³⁷ The departures, displacements and dislocations of women intellectuals' networks not only reflect the significant changes in the geo-political landscape of wartime China, but also indicate the fragmentary process of Chinese intellectuals' political identification with the competing political parties and factions.

Focusing on the impact of the deteriorating KMT-CCP conflicts on women intellectuals' political networks, this chapter examines the divisions, departures and dislocations of women intellectuals' political networks after the New Fourth Army Incident. However, instead of viewing 1941 as the watershed year that precipitated abrupt "retrogression" of the women's movement, this chapter argues that the Incident was not the only cause of the structural and personnel changes within women intellectuals' political networks in the early 1940s. As the War stretched on, the rhetoric of United Front and "national resistance" became less relevant to maintaining an official political cross-party organisation such as the WAC amongst women with different political affiliations. Before the Incident, KMT women leaders had repeatedly proposed to restore the KMT Central Women's Department (国民党中央妇女部) in order to enhance the KMT's central control over women's organisations. In the meantime, women activists from the NSA and the CCP had also established the Women's Committee of the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association in Chongqing, in order to reorganize left-wing women's networks under the guidance of the CCP South Bureau.

While the Incident had an impact on women intellectual's political affiliations—both personal and public—it failed to penetrate their cross-party networks at both the national and local level. Song Meiling's decision to maintain the WAC instead of to restore the KMT Central Women's Department indicates that the WAC as a platform for women's cross-party cooperation was still valued, at least by Song. Deng Yingchao and her colleagues at the CCP South Bureau also adopted flexible and practical strategies to protect left-wing women's

²³⁷ Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1949*, 227.

networks as well as to maintain any possible political alliances in the KMT-controlled areas. In this light, “the retrogression of women’s movement” was only one perspective to understand the influence of the New Fourth Army Incident on women’s political participation during the War. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that, the “retrogression period” was both destructive and constructive for women intellectuals’ political networks. On the one hand, damages were made to some crucial cross-party platforms such as the WAC and the PPC. But on the other hand, women intellectuals continued to grow personal ties and underground networks, which helped with the survival and development of non-KMT women’s organisations under the harsh socio-political conditions.

Problems arising from inside

As I argued in the previous chapters, the integration of and the connections between various women’s organisations at the first stage of the War does not mean that a seamless women’s United Front was henceforth established, neither does the expansion of the WAC in Wuhan and later in Chongqing suggest that all of its members had resolved their political differences overnight to serve the purpose of national resistance. Women intellectuals involved in the WAC network in Chongqing were KMT members, wives of KMT officials, non-partisans, CCP members, undercover communist activists, and even female spies serving different authorities in Chongqing. To achieve any kind of mutual understanding among them was already difficult, let alone to build trust under the so-called women’s United Front as Madame Chiang had called for at the Lushan Women’s Summit in 1938.

Problems first arose within the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee led by KMT women leaders Tang Guozhen, Shen Huilian and Chen Yiyun.²³⁸ In March 1939, the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee convened the 26th Conference at the KMT Central Social Ministry, which was attended by KMT women leaders Shen Huilian, Tang Guozhen,

²³⁸ The list of committee members, KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee, CMA, 0051-0002-00565.

Liu Hengjing, Ren Peidao, Tao Jitian, Mo Guokang, Fu Yang and Xu Kairui.²³⁹ Apart from the routine updates of their work progress, work-related problems were also pointed out in their reports. The discussion began with questioning the absence of *Fukanghui*²⁴⁰ from all the preparation meetings for the Women's Day celebration this year. Ren Peidao explained that *Fukanghui* missed the preparation meetings simply because they had not been informed of the meeting, and when they were finally informed, it was already too late. However, these KMT women leaders did not further discuss the miscommunication between different women's organisations in Chongqing; instead they paid more attention to another matter: the suspicious political identity of a Ms. Li who recently contacted the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee. Tang Guozhen reported the whole story:

When Mr. and Ms. Li Meng arrived in Chongqing, Lü Xiaodao and I received a letter from the International Publicity Department (国际宣传处), and we also asked for instructions from Madame Chiang. But since we did not know which clique (派系) this Ms. Li was coming from, we did not receive her.²⁴¹

Following Tang Guozhen, Mo Guokang reported the follow-up investigations and her conclusion:

We did our investigation and found out that Mr. and Ms. Li were both "left-wing elements" (左倾分子), who provide materials about women's organisations in our country. I do not think this would cause any problem. Only the "others" are providing such materials; none of the materials used overseas for propaganda is from us.²⁴²

Barely related to the meeting agenda on the day, this conversation recorded in the meeting minutes shows KMT women leaders' political vigilance against other factions/cliques within women's networks. Even with a letter of introduction from the International Publicity

²³⁹ "Zhongguo guomindang zhongyangzhixing weiyuanhui funüyundong weiyuanhui di ershiliu ci huiyijilu", 602-604.

²⁴⁰ Here *Fukanghui* refers to the Chinese Women's Association of War Relief and Self-defence for the Army in Resistance (中国妇女慰劳自卫抗战将士总会).

²⁴¹ "Zhongguo guomindang zhongyangzhixing weiyuanhui funüyundong weiyuanhui di ershiliu ci huiyijilu", 602-604.

²⁴² Ibid.

Department, the arrival of a strange couple in Chongqing who sought to engage with women's organisations seemed suspicious to the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee. Song Meiling was immediately informed, investigations quickly followed, and the results were discussed in a regular meeting and recorded in the meeting minutes.

Since the Central Women's Movement Committee was under the influence of the C.C. Clique, this mysterious couple were first suspected of being members of another clique, and then identified as "left-wing elements". Judging from Mo Guokang's dubious conclusion that the activities of this couple "would not cause any problem", it is unlikely that the identity of this couple had been finally confirmed. However, due to the unclear reference of "the others", it is difficult to further verify the political identity of the "left-wing elements", who could be left-wing KMT members and who could also be undercover communists. This internal communication among KMT women leaders shows that the KMT women's network functioned effectively for the purpose of political intelligence against members of other parties or cliques. And it is evident that, at least within the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee, the United Front based on harmony and trust between different political parties, groups and factions was more of rhetoric than practice.

Despite Song Meiling's advocacy of women's unification cross parties, most KMT women leaders from the Central Women's Movement Committee were keen on restoring the KMT Central Women's Department rather than maintaining the WAC as a cross-party framework. Ever since the prestigious KMT Central Women's Department was dismissed after the National Revolution, which government department should cover women's work was under dispute. Firstly affiliated with the KMT Central Mass Training Department in the early 1930s, then under the jurisdiction of the KMT Central Social Department since 1938, the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee was kicked around between different government departments like an unwanted ball.²⁴³ For years, many KMT women leaders had pleaded with the government to restore the KMT Central Women's Department as an independent

²⁴³ Zhu Jiahua, "Fuyun zhi huigu yu jinhou zhi xiwang" [The Retrospect and Prospect of Women's Movements], the Central Organisation Department, 7 April, 1941, source from *Zhongguo fun üyundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)*, 712.

government department directly reporting to the KMT Central Executive Committee. But they were only to be disappointed again in 1941 when the Central Women's Movement Committee was eventually put under the jurisdiction of the KMT Central Organisation Department. Although KMT women leaders were promised that this was only a temporary arrangement, the discussion on the recovery of the Central Women's Department was suspended time and again because of other wartime priorities of the government.²⁴⁴

Concerned about their own lack of power, women leaders of the Central Women's Movement Committee attempted to rely on Song Meiling's leadership to fulfil their political ambition. Besides lobbying Song Meiling directly with their proposals, these women leaders wanted Song to believe that local women activists also felt the urge to restore the Central Women's Department. A telegraph was thus sent from the Central Women's Movement Committee to the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, suggesting local women's organisations all support the recovery of the Central Women's Department and the leadership of Madam Chiang. In this telegraph, local women's organisations were requested to "quickly reply via telegraph to show your support."²⁴⁵

The use of telegraphs significantly expedited and enhanced information exchange between Chongqing, the Nationalist political centre, and local organisations in the KMT-held areas. However, due to its limited content, a telegraph could hardly support the communication needed for an important issue as such. In order to further discuss the issue of "restoring the Central Women's Department", the KMT women leaders organised a forum at the KMT Organisation Department on 21 April 1941. It was at this forum that Song Meiling officially responded to the plea of her KMT sisters:

²⁴⁴ "Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang zhixing weiyuanhui zuzhibu funü yundong weiyuanhui zuzhiguicheng" [The Charter of the Women's Movement Committee under the KMT Organisation Department], 6 January, 1941, document collected by the KMT Central Executive Committee Secretariat, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)*, 703-704.

²⁴⁵ Telegraph from the Central Women's Movement Committee to Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, (undated), Yunnan Provincial Archives (YPA), 104-01-10.

These days, many of you have approached me with the issue of re-establishing the Central Women's Department and asked me to be the head of the department. I am very grateful but also feel the lack of energy to add a new responsibility to my already heavy work in various women's organisations [...] The WAC, previously an organisation to encourage young women to participate in the New Life Movement, is now supporting the common interests of women in national salvation and social reforms. Although at the moment the WAC is not directly led by our party, it would not be a problem to fold it into KMT women's organisations in the future.²⁴⁶

The communication between KMT women leaders and Song Meiling indicates that the idea of establishing an exclusive and independent national women's organisation under the KMT's control was becoming popular amongst KMT members, in particular those C.C. women at the Central Women's Movement Committee. Song Meiling was aware that if she had agreed to re-establish the KMT Central Women's Department and to become the head herself, she would immediately distance women members from other political parties and therefore jeopardise the foundation of the WAC. Her rejection shows her unwillingness to terminate the cross-party platform of the WAC and her hesitation about centralising all women's organisations under the KMT. However, under the incremental pressure coming from KMT women's organisations, Song Meiling had to promise her followers that the central control of women's organisations under the KMT would only be a matter of time.

Given the growing tension between the two competing political sides, the cross-party framework of the WAC began to be damaged in the early 1940s, and the goal of political cooperation amongst women intellectuals from different political backgrounds proved to be more difficult than Song Meiling had believed. Only three years previously at the Lushan Women's Summit, Song Meiling had sounded confident in her opening speech: "Personally, I think the most urgent need of our country is the unity and cooperation between political

²⁴⁶ "Jiang furen xunci" [Madam Chiang's Instructions], 21 April, 1941, in Central Organisation Department ed., *Fuyun ganbu gongzuo taolunhui jiyao* [Meeting Minutes of the Women Leaders' Forum about Women's Movements], August 1941, 4-5. Cited from Xia, *Fun üzhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 367.

parties. All parties should abolish biases for the interest of the country.”²⁴⁷ However in 1941, “unity and cooperation”—the political foundation of the WAC—was already an omitted point in the three-year work summary of the WAC. Delivered by WAC director-general Zhang Aizhen, this lengthy report was divided into six sections to cover almost all the achievements the WAC had made as well as the problems it had encountered since 1937. The women’s United Front across different political parties, however, was not even mentioned once in the report, let alone stressed.²⁴⁸

Given the gradual changes in the leadership and agenda of the WAC, left-wing women intellectuals also began to seek new political platforms to accommodate their networks. As early as 1940, Deng Yingchao and Li Dequan had established a Women’s Committee under the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association, which later hosted many CCP and NSA women activists withdrawn from the WAC in Chongqing.²⁴⁹ Religious organisations such as the YWCA led by Zhang Aizhen and the WCTU led by Liu-Wang Liming also became temporary political shelters for women intellectuals to sustain their cross-party political networking and communication.²⁵⁰

However, for many women intellectuals who had neither the obligation nor the desire to stay in the political circles, to leave the WAC might have been their personal choice. Facing the intensive air raids in Chongqing and the lack of political and financial support within the WAC, Xia Bengying, the KMT activist who I mentioned at the beginning of the introduction, decided to leave the WAC to pursue her further education:

I left [Wuhan] in February 1939 and arrived in Chongqing in June. I had several meetings with the WAC training director Liu Qingyang. However, we received less and less support

²⁴⁷ “Lushan funü tanhuahui kaimuci” [The Opening Speech at the Lushan Women’s Summit], *Women’s Life* Vol.6 Issue 3 (1938), source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)*, 581-583.

²⁴⁸ “Xinshenghuo yundong cujinzonghui funü zhidao weiyuanhui sannian gongzuozongjie” [The Three-Year Work Summary of the “New Life Movement” Women’s Advisory Council], 1 July, 1941, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)*, 739-744.

²⁴⁹ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 310.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 467.

for providing help to refugee children behind the enemy lines. At that time, Changsha and Yichang had already fallen to Japanese troops one after another; it was already impossible for me to return to the East. But Chongqing suffered frequent air raids, so I decided to go to Jiangjin [a county about 50 kilometres to the southwest of Chongqing], to study English and Mathematics at Baisha University, in order to fulfil myself.²⁵¹

Xia Bengying's narrative shows that besides the distrust and miscommunication among women's organisations, the worsening financial and living conditions for women activists in Chongqing made it more difficult for them to stay organised under the women's United-Front. Judging from the problems arising from inside of women intellectuals' organisations in Chongqing, it would be arbitrary to argue that the New Fourth Army Incident was the only cause of the changes in women intellectuals' cross-party political cooperation and the only reason for the divisions, departures and dislocations of women intellectuals' networks in the early 1940s. Ever since these women intellectuals moved to Chongqing, their determination for "national resistance" was undermined by the deteriorating political, financial and living conditions. Given their diverse political backgrounds and affiliations, it would only be a matter of time before these émigré intellectuals feel disappointed about not having a concrete political identity, detailed working plans and sufficient financial support, therefore disillusioned about the so-called women's United Front for national resistance. In view of this, the New Fourth Army Incident and its aftermath only accelerated the process of women intellectuals' identification with the two polarising political sides, during which they tried to realign and relocate their political networks.

Coming events cast their shadows before them (山雨欲来风满楼)

As promised to her followers within the KMT, Song Meiling sped up the expansion of KMT membership within women's organisations in Chongqing. By 1941, the majority of the trainees accepted into the WAC "women cadres" training class (妇女干部训练班) were

²⁵¹ Xia Bengying, "Wode xiaoshi", 1949, NMA, 7004-1-1.

already KMT members. Non-KMT women's political activities were under stricter control, as Edwards states, "with the promulgation of the Nationalist government's policy for the prevention of the activities of the illegal women's movement, women's activism by non-KMT women was more dangerous."²⁵² The KMT's changing attitude toward non-KMT women activists, in particular the communists, had already been sensed by the CCP South Bureau before the New Fourth Army Incident.

In spring 1939, Guo Jian, an undercover communist who led one of the WAC service groups in Hunan, was told by the WAC headquarters to take her group back to Chongqing. Guo Jian was uncertain why she was suddenly called back, and given her sensitive political status, she wondered whether it would be safer to quit the WAC and go to a CCP base. Considering that the base of the New Fourth Army in Anhui was closer to Hunan than the CCP headquarters in Yan'an, she contacted the office of the Eighth Route Army in Hengyang and explained her intention to join the New Fourth Army. The Hengyang office advised her to contact the CCP South Bureau in Chongqing for permission first. Guo then sent a telegraph to Chongqing. Unfortunately the telegraph did not reach Deng Yingchao, who happened to be in Chengdu at the time. Knowing very little about Guo Jian's situation, the colleague who received the telegraph asked Guo to come back to Chongqing straight away.²⁵³ Three days after she had arrived in Chongqing, Guo Jian finally met with Deng Yingchao, but Deng was utterly surprised by her sudden arrival in Chongqing.

Although the WAC was a national organisation comprised of members from different political parties, women leaders with a non-KMT political background were frequently suspected of being communists and therefore targeted by KMT secret agents. The secret agents in Chongqing had repeatedly warned Song Meiling about Guo's suspicious political identity and accused her of being a communist. This was the reason why Song Meiling suddenly called Guo Jian back from Hunan. The letters Song received from secret agents in Chongqing were processed by Zhang Aizheng, therefore Feng Guangguan, the assistant of

²⁵² Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy*, 220.

²⁵³ Guo Jian, "Song Meiling dongyuan wo jiaru guomindang" [Song Meiling Persuading Me to Join the KMT], *Bainianchao* [Tide of the Century] 5 (1998): 63-64.

Zhang Aizhen and also an undercover communist working inside of the WAC, informed Deng Yingchao of Guo Jian's dangerous situation. But before Deng Yingchao had the chance to contact Guo, she had already returned to Chongqing. It was already too risky to make Guo "disappear" in front of Song Meiling's eyes. In order to avoid the KMT's further suspicion and to protect the entire communist network within the WAC, Deng Yingchao refused to transfer Guo from Chongqing to Yan'an at this very moment:

No, you should try to settle down in Chongqing otherwise your undercover identity will be completely revealed. Once you leave for Yan'an, those democratic intellectuals and left-wing activists who are related to you will be suspected by the KMT too. It is lucky that your CCP identity is still unknown to the public and that your name did not appear on any of our staff lists—they do not have any evidence. So you should take this chance to confront Song Meiling and deny your communist identity.²⁵⁴

Not long after her conversation with Deng Yingchao, Guo Jian was invited by Song Meiling for a chat. Song came straight to the point: "Are you a communist?" Guo Jian denied as advised: "Who said that I am a communist? I support resistance, democracy and freedom; I consider opinions from both sides and make my own decisions; therefore I must be a communist? I stayed in Hunan for more than half a year leading your service group, now I become a communist as soon as I arrive in Chongqing?"²⁵⁵ Although Song Meiling felt relieved after hearing Guo Jian's answer, she still could not be convinced without persuading Guo Jian to join the KMT.

In order to ensure the loyalty of WAC members to the KMT, Song pressed all of WAC leaders and chief members into joining the KMT. In 1940, she had three meetings with Guo Jian. During these meetings, Song explained that she had nothing to do with the KMT secret agencies; she also promised that she would support democracy and allow free access to books and magazines published by other parties.²⁵⁶ Despite Song Meiling's promises, Guo Jian felt herself stuck in ambivalence: On the one hand, she was encouraged by Deng Yingchao to

²⁵⁴ Guo, "Song Meiling dongyuan wo jiaru guomindang", 63-64.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 64.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 64-65.

join the KMT in order to influence Song Meiling and the decision makers within the WAC. On the other hand, she was afraid of being isolated from her friends if she joined the KMT. Guo Jian could not make up her mind until Zhou Enlai said to her: “Why do you hesitate? You can work across parties. We decided to send you there because it would benefit our work.”²⁵⁷ After further negotiations with Song Meiling, Guo Jian finally agreed to join the KMT. However this matter was somehow delayed because of Song’s marriage crisis at the end of 1940, right before the New Fourth Army Incident.

Like Shanghai after the April Coup in 1927 where thousands of communists were arrested and killed by the KMT, Chongqing after the New Fourth Army Incident was no longer a safe place for undercover communists like Guo Jian.²⁵⁸ Her name reappeared on the blacklist created by KMT secret agency. And this time, the CCP South Bureau decided to transfer Guo Jian immediately to the base of the New Fourth Army. The “retrogression period” in the eyes of women intellectuals started with political persecution and personnel reshuffle within the WAC:

Ever since the New Fourth Army Incident, crosscurrents appeared in the political tides of wartime China. The National Association for Refugee Children, an organisation that was initiated for women’s unity and cooperation, has now been restructured. Many directors, suspected by the KMT of being communists, either resigned or were transferred. The WAC is now in a ‘half-frozen’ situation. When the blacklist came out, those who used to work hard with their feet on the ground were all on the list. An executive director of the Chongqing Women’s Relief Branch, Ms xxx, was arrested at midnight without any charge; some women activists who hid in dugouts were found and arrested. We came here [the WAC] to serve the nation, but now we have ended up with hiding in air-raid shelters. It

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ For more information on the 12 April Coup and the underground CCP in Shanghai after the Coup, please see Patricia Stranahan, *Underground: The Shanghai communist Party and the Politics of Survival, 1927-1937* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 17-43.

would be better just to leave the WAC [...] thus members drifted out and scattered away from Chongqing.²⁵⁹

For personal safety and freedom, many non-KMT women intellectuals withdrew from the WAC and the PPC, some left Chongqing for Guilin, Kunming and Hong Kong, and some even drifted overseas in exile. Following the withdrawal of key CCP and NSA members, the KMT carried out a personnel reshuffle on the WAC. The YWCA leader and WAC director-general Zhang Aizhen replaced Shi Liang as the chair of the WAC Liaison Committee, and Xie Bingxin replaced Shen Zijiu as the director of the WAC Cultural Department.²⁶⁰ Huang Cuifeng replaced Liu Qingyang, the director of the WAC Training Department, who had been suspected of being an undercover communist by the head of the C.C. Clique Chen Lifu as well as by KMT women leaders within the WAC.²⁶¹

Furthermore, instead of communication, investigation became the principal method applied by the WAC Liaison Committee to develop new membership and affiliations in the wartime capital. It is stated in the Committee's three-year work summary in 1941 that, thorough investigation should be prerequisite to all the other work. Although it is not clear whether the investigation was generally targeted at any suspicious personnel from the opponent factions and groups, or specifically targeted at communist networks in town, it is certain that the WAC, like the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee, had then transformed into an intelligence network for the KMT to investigate the political relations of its members and to purge its political enemies:

Apart from using visits, correspondence, private meetings and talks to directly learn about their target members, the Liaison Committee also relied on news and reports from different media for background checking. All types of surveys and questionnaires were applied to

²⁵⁹ Shen, "Kangzhan sinianlai de funü yundong".

²⁶⁰ Xia, *Funü zhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*, 345; Song Qinghong, "Zhanhou xinyun fuzhihui de zuzhi bianqian" [The Organisational Changes in the "New Life Movement" Women's Advisory Council after the War], *Shixue yuekan* [Historical Studies Monthly] 5 (2012): 80.

²⁶¹ Liu, "Huiyi xinyun funü zhidao weiyuanhui xunlianzu".

investigate different women's groups, female students at school and female dependents of military personnel.²⁶²

Seeing the worsened political situation, the CCP South Bureau decided to transfer some undercover members to Yan'an or other relatively safe places in order to avoid further damages to communist networks. The CCP South Bureau also provided assistance to those democratic intellectuals from the minor political parties whose safety had been threatened in Chongqing. Many prominent intellectuals went to Kong Hong, where they tried to recover their political networks and maintain connections with Chongqing. Liu Qingyang and Shen Zijiu, two prominent leaders of the NSA and previous directors of the WAC, were among those women intellectuals who were transferred to Hong Kong after the Incident.

Leaving Chongqing after 1941: The cases of Liu Qingyang and Shen Zijiu

Like the "intelligence network" developed among KMT women leaders in Chongqing, the undercover communist network within the WAC was also responsible for information collection and investigation. According to the memory of Guo Jian and Lu Huinian, some information about the blacklist of "CCP dangerous figures" had been leaked out to the CCP South Bureau by a non-CCP "friend". Deng Yingchao and Zhang Xiaomei therefore decided to immediately transfer away those women intellectuals who were on the list. Deng asked Feng Huangguan to inform them to leave the WAC overnight and to retreat from Chongqing with the help of the CCP South Bureau. Only a few unexposed undercover communists such as Feng Guangguan and Hu Wenjing were arranged by Deng to stay in the WAC until 1949 in order to keep sending out useful information to the CCP South Bureau.²⁶³ Those NSA members, whose political identities and relations were not yet questioned by the KMT, were allowed to stay in Chongqing to continue their work underground.²⁶⁴ Among the prominent WAC leaders, Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun, Luo Shuzhang and Lu Huinian managed to stay in

²⁶² *Xinyun fun ü zhidao weiyuanhui sanzhou nian jinian tekan*, 51.

²⁶³ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 487.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 492.

Chongqing but all had withdrawn from the organisation, while Liu Qingyang, Shen Ziji, Guo Jian and Han Youtong went to Hong Kong by the end of 1941.

In 1941 Hong Kong became a shelter for many prominent Chinese intellectuals and social elites who had escaped from the mainland after the New Fourth Army Incident. The famous writer Mao Dun, together with his colleagues at the Hong Kong branch of the All-China Resistance Association in Literary and Art Circles (中华全国文艺界抗敌协会香港分会), decided to build a “second frontline (第二战线) for national resistance. With He Xiangning’s help, Mao Dun joined the famous playwright Xia Yan and journalist Fan Changjiang in launching *Hwa Shiang Pao* (华商报), a left-wing newspaper in Hong Kong. Although *Hwa Shiang Pao* was only published for less than five months before the fall of Hong Kong, it played an important role in recovering the network among those intellectuals who had retreated to Hong Kong in 1941, such as Liu Qingyang.²⁶⁵

Using the excuse of picking up her two children in Hong Kong, Liu Qingyang left Chongqing for Hong Kong in May 1941:

At the time [after the New Fourth Army Incident], Deng Yingchao told me about her concerns, and Zhou Enlai thought that it was time for me to leave the WAC. I asked where I should go; Deng said that it would be the best if I could go to Hong Kong to continue promoting national resistance there [...] Before I left the WAC, many of our women leaders had already been sent away—Xia Yingzhe had gone to Yan’an, and Guo Jian had gone to Hong Kong. In the early morning of 9 May 1941, I took the truck with some friends doing business and left Chongqing.²⁶⁶

After Liu Qingyang had arrived in Hong Kong, she needed to recover her political contacts and make a living. With the help of the famous overseas Chinese intellectual Zhuang Xiquan, Liu Qingyang was hired to manage a girls’ school in Kowloon. She also got in touch with Zhang Youyu, the chief editor of *Hwa Shiang Pao*, through whom she got involved in the

²⁶⁵ Mao Dun, “Zhandou de 1941 nian—huiyilu 28” [Fighting in 1941—My Memoir, No.28], (undated), source from the CNKI Database, 1994-2002 China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, 53.

²⁶⁶ Liu, “Huiyi xinyun funü zhidao weiyuanhui xunlianzu”.

editing work of some local newspapers and journals in Hong Kong.²⁶⁷ Staying in Hong Kong during the same period of time were also Liu's previous colleagues within the WAC Han Youtong and Guo Jian. Guo Jian used to work under Liu Qingyang in the WAC Training Department, while Han Youtong chaired the women's constitutional forums together with Liu one year earlier in Chongqing. Since Liu was working for Zhang Youyu, the husband of Han Youtong, it is likely that she and Han also kept in touch in Hong Kong. And after both of them returned to Chongqing in 1942, they joined the Women's Committee of the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association together.²⁶⁸

However, not every intellectual woman who had stayed in Hong Kong in 1941 was able to re-establish her political contacts or return to Chongqing afterwards. For another WAC leader Shen Zijiu, her political transfer from the WAC to the base of the New Fourth Army and then to Hong Kong, finally became a seven-year "political exile" overseas. It is likely that the CCP South Bureau helped organise Shen Zijiu's transfer from Chongqing to the base of the New Fourth Army and then to Singapore by way of Hong Kong, but in her future husband Hu Yuzhi's view, it was more of an escape with little preparation than an arrangement by the CCP: "After the New Fourth Army Incident, she escaped from the mainland and had nowhere else to go."²⁶⁹

Unlike Liu Qingyang, Shen Zijiu stayed in Hong Kong for a very short period and she maintained such a low profile that only Mao Dun mentioned in passing in his memoir how he had encountered Shen Zijiu in Hong Kong:

I managed to move out of hotel and rent a small room; it was a two-storey house on Kennedy Road. The second floor was already taken by two tenants, one was Zhang Tiesheng, the editor of *World Knowledge* (世界知识), and the other was Shen Zijiu with her daughter Lüyi. After Shen Zijiu noticed that I had a tiny room reconstructed from the

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 310.

²⁶⁹ Shen Zijiu and Hu Yuzhi, *Liuwang zai chidaoxian shang* [Exile along the Equator] (Shenghuo Dushu Xinzhi—Sanlian Shudian Press, 1985), 86.

balcony, she told me that she would leave Hong Kong for Singapore soon, so that her room would be available for me shortly.²⁷⁰

Judging from Mao Dun's words, it is not difficult to speculate that, unlike Liu Qingyang, Shen Zijiu did not have a formal job or active life in Hong Kong. When she had nothing to do and nowhere to go, Zhou Enlai suggested that she go to Singapore to assist Hu Yuzhi with *Nanyang Siang Pau* (南洋商报), a newspaper founded by the philanthropist-entrepreneur Tan Kah Kee (Chen Jiageng) in 1923 and edited by Hu since 1940. Before the fall of Singapore in 1941, nearly twenty prominent intellectuals from China were working there, including the editor of *Nanyang Siang Pau* Hu Yuzhi, writer and poet Yu Dafu, novelist Gao Yunlan and Wang Renshu. Not long after Shen had arrived in Singapore, she fell in love with Hu Yuzhi and married him in the summer of 1941 at a small café²⁷¹

However, Singapore failed to provide the newly-married couple with a shelter against the prolonged war, terror and turmoil. After the British-led forces had surrendered and retreated from the allied stronghold in Singapore, the island was taken by Japanese troops. The newly-married couple and the other Chinese intellectuals in Singapore had to retreat to Sumatra, where they stayed for three years and eight months escaping Japanese militants and secret agents. The lack of economic resources forced this group of prominent intellectuals to try every means for survival. They learnt to make soaps, toothpastes, paper, cigarettes and wine in order to make a living in the tropical rainforest, and they studied local languages in order to do business with local Indonesians. They also pretended to be businesspeople and used fake names to avoid investigations by the Japanese military police. Being vigilant and disguised, Yu Dafu, the poet who spoke both Japanese and Indonesian, was still taken away by the local military police to work as their translator and then mysteriously went missing in 1945. He was suspected of being killed by the Japanese military in September 1945 after Japan had lost the War, but no solid evidence was found at that time.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Mao, "Zhandou de 1941 nian—huiyilu 28".

²⁷¹ Shen and Hu, *Liuwang zhai chidaoxian shang*.

²⁷² Ibid.

During the more than three years of exile in Sumatra, Shen Zijiu's contact with the mainland was completely cut off. It was only after the surrender of Japan in 1945 that she finally returned to Singapore with Hu Yuzhi and got a home address—68A Robinson Road, Singapore. Shen Zijiu wrote to Chongqing immediately after she had returned to Singapore, and one month later, she received a short telegram from Shen Junru and Shi Liang. Hu Yuzhi also wrote to his old friends Zheng Zhenduo and Xia Gaizun in Shanghai, as well as a few friends in Hong Kong in order to obtain more news about the mainland after the War.²⁷³ It is unknown whether Shen Zijiu also tried to contact the CCP South Bureau, the institution that ordered her transfers to the New Fourth Army and again to Singapore, or if she found it too risky to contact the CCP directly without clear information about the political situation in Chongqing. But it is evident that after she resumed contacts with Shi Liang and Shen Junru, she also restored her political connections with the CCP. In 1948, after over seven years of life in exile in Indonesia and Singapore, Shen Zijiu and Hu Yuzhi went to the new CCP headquarters in Xibaipo to participate in the preparation for the CCP's new Political Consultative Conference.²⁷⁴

The cases of Liu Qingyang and Shen Zijiu demonstrate that, although maintaining their political organisation was uneasy for women intellectuals who left Chongqing after the New Fourth Army Incident, their previous political networks did not simply disappear due to their departures and dislocations. Shen Zijiu resumed her contact with NSA leaders Shi Liang and Sheng Junru as soon as she returned to Singapore and she also maintained connection with the CCP so that she was able to go to Xibaipo during the Civil War with the Party's help. After Liu Qingyang returned to Chongqing in 1942, she joined the Democratic League²⁷⁵

²⁷³ "Nanyang tongxun" [Letters from Southeast Asia], 1946, SMA, C40-1-2-22.

²⁷⁴ The first Chinese People's Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is also known as the new People's Consultative Conference, to be distinguished from the first People's Consultative Conference summoned by the KMT in 1946.

²⁷⁵ The Chinese Democratic League was founded as the Federation of Democratic Parties in 1941 and restructured and renamed as the Democratic League in 1944 when it opened its membership to individuals. To avoid confusion, I will use the name Democratic League in general when the time of a member's participation is not specified.

and the SSCA Women's Committee, thus resumed her network amongst left-wing women intellectuals in Chongqing.

Staying in Chongqing after 1941: Xie Bingxin at the WAC

After the New Fourth Army Incident, to rebuild trust and cooperation amongst women intellectuals from different political backgrounds and to resume cross-party communication and networking were the challenges for women leaders who stayed in Chongqing. While Song Meiling and Deng Yingchao both sought to expand their own political networks by winning over non-affiliated women elites and democratic intellectuals, competitions between KMT women's organisations and left-wing women's organisations became more and more intense. Xie Bingxin, the famous female writer who was invited by Song Meiling to lead the WAC Cultural Department after Shen Zijiu had left Chongqing, found that there was no longer a women's United Front for national resistance in the wartime capital.

After Shen Zijiu left the WAC in 1940, Song Meiling thought of a perfect replacement to direct the WAC Cultural Department: Xie Bingxin, a graduate from Wellesley College in the US and at the time a famous female writer. As a Wellesley alumna educated in the US like Song herself, and also a popular female writer who already had readers and fans among women, Xie Bingxin was the kind of talent that Song Meiling was seeking for the WAC. Knowing that Xie was not involved in the political circles, Song Meiling decided to approach her through a personal network. She asked Gu Yiqiao, a friend who went to the US with Xie in 1923 on the same ship, to invite Xie to Chongqing.²⁷⁶

For Xie Bingxin, the decision to move to Chongqing was not an easy one. At that time, she was living with her husband and three children in a small town called Chenggong, not far from Kunming. The name of her house, "Residence of Silence" (静庐), indicates her intention to avoid all kinds of turmoil during the wartime period. However, after stressing the importance of establishing a women's United Front for national resistance, Gu Yiqiao

²⁷⁶ Yan Kunyan, "Kangzhan shiqi Bingxin zai Chongqing de suiyue" [Bingxin in Chongqing during the War of Resistance], *Wangshi guren* [The Past] 01 (2010): 41-42.

eventually convinced Xie to accept the offer. In 1940, Xie Bingxin moved to Chongqing with her entire family.²⁷⁷ In Chongqing, Song Meiling treated Xie Bingxin as an old friend and schoolmate from Wellesley, and she even invited Xie to her official residence at Zengjiayan for lunch. Feeling valued, Xie Bingxin started her work at the WAC Culture Department with full aspiration and high expectations.²⁷⁸

However, what Xie Bingxin did not expect were the complicated social and political relations women intellectuals held across various political parties and factions. She had little experience of the existing distrust and antagonisms among members of the WAC. She could never imagine that a friendly chat might actually be arranged for the purpose of checking her political status, while a seemingly well-intentioned home visit might actually be a disguised political investigation of her own house. Once Xie Bingxin was invited by Zhang Aizhen, the director-general of the WAC, for dinner but could not attend due to her sudden illness. The next day, Zhang Aizhen sent a doctor to her house to check on her. Deeply touched, Xie Bingxin mentioned Zhang's kind gesture to Shi Liang and expressed her gratitude to Zhang Aizhen. However, much to Xie's surprise, Shi Liang warned her about these unexpected "kind visits": "You are too gullible! Do you think that they really care for you? No, they came to check if you were really ill or not, and they were actually spying on you!" Not long after, Liu Qingyang also exhorted her to be more vigilant: "Not everyone in the WAC is here for national resistance; the political situation is very complicated now, so you have to be more careful."²⁷⁹

With limited political experience, Xie Bingxin felt uncomfortable about the distrust and contention within the WAC; she was also disappointed by Song Meiling, the one who had portrayed a harmonious picture of women united for national resistance in Chongqing. Therefore, when Chiang Kai-shek's personal consultant Chen Bulei tried to persuade Xie to join the KMT, she declined, "I would have proved my strength of character if I had joined

²⁷⁷ Ren Dongmei, "Bingxin yu Jinglu" [Bingxin and the Residence of Tranquillity], *Bayu wenmai* (undated), 164-165, source from the CNKI Database, 1994-2002 China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House.

²⁷⁸ Yan, "Kangzhan shiqi Bingxin zai Chongqing de suiyue", 43.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

you when your party was still in struggle for power, but now your party is already in power, I am afraid that there is not much left for me to contribute.”²⁸⁰ After the New Fourth Army Incident, Xie Bingxin resigned from the WAC and moved to a cottage in suburb of Chongqing. This cottage, named “Residence of Tranquillity” (潜庐) by Xie, like her “Residence of Silence” in Kunming, symbolises the distance from politics Chinese intellectuals sometimes desired to keep, especially when they were not satisfied by the current political situation.

Although Xie Bingxin had officially withdrawn from the WAC, she still maintained her friendships and personal connections with women intellectuals in Chongqing. Located at No.5 Linjia Temple in the Geleshan Mountain, Xie Bingxin’s “Residence of Tranquillity” became a perfect place for intellectuals to get together and to temporarily escape the political turmoil in town. At her cottage, Xie received friends from the literary circles such as Lao She, Ba Jin, Mao Dun and Guo Moruo; women leaders Shi Liang and Liu Qingyang were also her regular guests.²⁸¹ On Women’s Day in 1942, Xie joined KMT women leaders in a broadcast speech organised by the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee, and gave a radio talk about the present issues in the women’s movement.²⁸² It is unknown who invited Xie to this KMT women’s event, but her participation as the only non-KMT member proved that she still kept personal connections with women intellectuals from the KMT after her withdrawal from the WAC.

Xie Bingxin’s political involvement in the WAC and her relationship with Song Meiling during the War indicate that, although after the New Fourth Incident the WAC failed as a formal political organisation to unite its members from different political backgrounds for national resistance, women intellectuals were still able to continue their cross-party political communication based on friendships and personal networks. Xie Bingxin was reluctant to get involved in the competitions and suspicions between different political sides, but her

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² The broadcast speech organised by the KMT Women’s Central Movement Committee, Central Organisation Department, 8 March, 1942, CMA, 0051-0002-00565, 117-126.

withdrawal from the WAC did not prevent her from maintaining friendships and personal contacts with her previous WAC colleagues, despite their different political affiliations. These interconnected personal ties and social linkages, on the one hand, made it more difficult for women intellectuals to identify with any particular political party or group; but on the other hand, they made it possible for women intellectuals to maintain communication across party lines after the political conditions changed. More important, as the next section demonstrates, these personal networks held among women intellectuals provided political parties, the CCP in particular, with critical support to its network development in the 1940s.

Staying in Chongqing after 1941: Ni Feijun at No. 50 Zengjiayan

Song Meiling was not the only female leader who managed to use personal linkages to enhance her political network among prominent women intellectuals. Communist leaders in Chongqing were also gifted at turning friendships and personal relationships into important political resources. Ni Feijun, the head of the Chongqing Women's Service Group for Refugees and wife of He Yaozu, the erstwhile head of Chiang's escort office (侍从室),²⁸³ was one of the friends Deng Yingchao made in Chongqing who later helped protect and develop left-wing women's political networks after the New Fourth Army Incident.

When Deng Yingchao and Zhou Enlai moved to Chongqing in December 1938, like many other émigré intellectuals, the first challenge they encountered was to find a house in a city teeming with migrants and refugees. What they could rely on to accomplish this task was not their political power but their personal network. Deng Yingchao knew that Li Jianhua, the head of KMT Chongqing Bureau of Social Affairs, and his wife Hu Xiufeng were both undercover communists who held broad social and political relations in Chongqing. At that time, Hu Xiufeng was working at the Chongqing Women's Service Group for Refugees led by Ni Feijun. As soon as Hu learnt that Deng Yingchao and Zhou Enlai had difficulty finding

²⁸³ Between 1942 and 1945, He Yaozu served as the Major of Chongqing. Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese marshal: the autobiographical notes of Peng Dehuai (1898-1974)* (Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 86.

a residence, she turned to Ni Feijun for help. Ni Feijun's Women's Service Group for Refugees was located on the first floor of a three-storey building at No.50 Zengjiayan. Knowing that Hu's friends needed a place to live and work, Ni managed to rent the ground and second floors to them. No.50 Zengjiayan therefore became the official residence of the CCP South Bureau in the city centre, and by chance, Deng Yingchao and Ni Feijun became "housemates".²⁸⁴

Sharing a house was not uncommon in wartime Chongqing, but trusting your housemates or neighbours was a different matter given the complicated political situation in town. Even for democratic intellectuals such as Lao Junzhan and her husband Xu Deheng, who had no direct connections with either the CCP or the KMT in Chongqing, feeling safe in a shared house was impossible.²⁸⁵ After their previous residence on Guofu Road was bombed by Japanese bombers in September 1940, the couple moved into a two-storey house halfway up a hill. However, this new residence was not really a safe home because of the identity of their housemates:

Living downstairs on the right hand side of the house was a family; the man called Long Zuowen was a member of the KMT Party Committee in Chongqing, and also a KMT agent serving at the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the KMT Central Executive Committee (well-known as *Zhongtong* 中统). The room on the left was rent to a single woman called Chen Yiyun who lived together with her mother. And this Miss Chen was also a KMT agent serving at the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics of the National Government Military Committee (well-known as *Juntong* 军统).²⁸⁶

Risks coexisted with political opportunities in these informal social contacts and personal relationships established through temporary house share in wartime Chongqing. Chen Yiyun,

²⁸⁴ Zhang Qifan, "Huainian Ni Feijun" [Commemorating Ni Feijun] source from *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian 42* [*The Selected Cultural and Historical Materials, Vol. 42*] (Beijing Press, 1990), 19-20.

²⁸⁵ Xu Deheng and his wife Lao Junzhan were both the founders of the Jiu-San Society, one of the existing minor political parties and groups in the PRC.

²⁸⁶ Xu Deheng, "Huiyi kangzhan" [Memories about the War of Resistance], (undated), source from the CNKI Database, 1994-2002 China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, 34-35.

remembered by Xu Deheng as a female *Juntong* agent, was also a prominent leader at the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee and the WAC. As stated in chapter 2, Chen was also a suffrage activist who had actively participated in the constitutionalist movement before the New Fourth Army Incident. It is unknown whether sharing a house with Chen Yiyun had any impact on Lao Junzhan's later involvement in the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee, but it is evident that sharing No. 50 Zengjiayan with Deng Yingchao affected Ni Feijun's political choice later on.

At the beginning, sharing a house with the CCP South Bureau resulted in a political dilemma for Ni Feijun. Her engagement with the "left-wing elements" in town quickly aroused suspicion as well as objection from high-ranking KMT officials, including He Yingqin, the Minister of War. He Yingqin and Ni's husband He Yaozu used to be classmates at the Imperial Japanese Army Academy in Tokyo. In the wartime capital, they were both among the highest ranking political officials and military leaders of the KMT. Ni Feijun began to be ambivalent about the relation between the CCP South Bureau and her organisation. On one occasion she invited some of her colleagues to her home and tried to test their attitudes: "He Yingqin told me that I have been fooled by all of you; our Women's Service Group for Refugees is now serving the communists in town. He asked me not to lead the Service Group anymore; otherwise I might harm my husband's future career."²⁸⁷

For those women activists following Ni Feijun, it was hard to understand how Ni's personal relationship could be more important than leading their Service Group and contributing to national resistance. They expressed their dissatisfaction with Ni Feijun in front of Deng Yingchao. Much to their surprise, Deng Yingchao disagreed with them: "What are we capable of doing if one day the head of our Women's Service Group for Refugees is not Mrs. He anymore?" It was because of He Yaozu's prominent political position in the KMT that the activities of the Group had been permitted and supported by the KMT in Chongqing. In this case, protecting Ni Feijun's personal relationship was as important as protecting left-wing women's political networks in the wartime capital.

²⁸⁷ Zhang, "Huainian Ni Feijun".

Deng Yingchao's practical networking strategies and her friendship with Ni Feijun, to a large extent, helped protect and maintain left-wing women's networks in Chongqing after the New Fourth Army Incident. When No. 50 Zengjiayan was in danger, only a few women activists of the CCP South Bureau were transferred to Yan'an; the majority received protection from Ni Feijun and managed to stay in Chongqing. According to Zhang Qifan's memoir, in order to help some left-wing women intellectuals escape political persecution in 1941; Ni Feijun used her husband's car to pick them up from No. 50 Zengjiayan and hid them in her husband's residence.²⁸⁸

The friendships and personal networks Ni Feijun had established at No. 50 Zengjiayan further influenced her political engagement and identification in 1940s Chongqing. Unlike most wives of high-ranking KMT officials, Ni Feijun did not join the Chongqing Women's Movement Committee (重庆妇女运动委员会) or the Chongqing Municipal Women's Community (重庆市妇女会), both under the control of the KMT,²⁸⁹ neither did she attend any extravagant high-society parties as the wife of the Chongqing Mayor.²⁹⁰ Instead, she led a women's service group of the WAC and assisted Song Qingling with the organisation of charity events to raise money for poor writers in town.²⁹¹ At No. 50 Zengjiayan, Ni Feijun also became familiar with democratic women intellectuals such as Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun, Du Junhui, Liu Qingyang and Hu Ziying, and together with them, she joined the SSCA Women's Committee. In December 1945, Ni Feijun handed her resignation to the WAC and joined the China Women's Association, a left-wing women's organisation supported by the CCP South Bureau; by doing so she further identified herself with left-wing democratic intellectuals after the War.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ The list of committee members, KMT Chongqing Women's Movement Committee, CMA, 0051-0002-00586; the list of managing directors and supervisors of the Chongqing Municipal Women's Community, 10 September, 1940, CMA, 0051-0002-00565, 8.

²⁹⁰ Jia Nong, "Guanyu Ni Feijun" [About Ni Feijun] *Renwu Zazhi* [People Magazine] Vol. 1 Issue 1 (1946).

²⁹¹ Zhang, "Huainian Ni Feijun".

²⁹² The report from the WAC to Chongqing Municipal Government on Ni Feijun's resignation, 14 December, 1945, CMA, 0053-0001-00225, 124.

Judging from the cases of Xie Bingxin and Ni Feijun, although the New Fourth Army Incident increased political division and polarisation amongst women intellectuals' political networks, it did not terminate women intellectuals' cross-party communication and networking. The wide personal ties and social linkages held among women intellectuals provided Song Meiling and Deng Yingchao with important political resources to enhance their political ability and influence. It was because of these personal ties and social linkages, the CCP South Bureau was able to protect and develop a left-wing women's network after the New Fourth Army Incident and to increase its impact on the women's movement in the KMT-controlled areas.

However, in the early-1940s Chongqing, the crises facing these women intellectuals were not only the divisions, departures and dislocations of their networks, but also the ideological backlash against women's political participation. After 1941, the KMT Central Organisation Department rephrased the patriarchal norm of "good wife and wise mother" in order to encourage women to fulfil their gender roles at home instead of political roles in public. The thought that "women belong to their households not politics" was spread within KMT institutions and organisations through the so-called "Education by Mothers Movement" (母教运动), which further altered the social and political spaces for women's political participation during the War and aroused strong protests from left-wing women intellectuals and communist leaders in Chongqing.

A new version of the "good wife and wise mother" discourse

As discussed in Chapter 1, women intellectuals used to fight firmly against the idea of "good wife and wise mother" which was advocated by the Nationalist government during its New Life Movement before the War. The wartime mobilisation for national resistance enlarged the spaces for women intellectuals' political participation, but it did not root out this patriarchal value in Chinese society, which was once and again utilised by the KMT to justify their backlash against women's political movements during the War. In 1941, at the opening

event for the KMT women leaders' forum, Zhu Jiahua, the KMT Minister of the Central Organisation Department offered his insights on the current women's movement in China:

Some people had the idea that only women's political movement could be counted as real women's movement, therefore only after every woman participated in politics, the women's movement could be successful. This is very wrong! We should know that it is necessary and beneficial to ensure that women all have some political sense, but to have every woman participating in politics is not only unnecessary but even pernicious [...] We need to be aware that political participation should by no means be the only purpose of the women's movement, neither should it be the main task. And this is a very important point.²⁹³

With this point made clear, the minister further urged women to play their traditional gender roles in the wartime society, especially at home so that their husbands would be able to play their roles more efficiently in public. Although the "thunderbolt" of the constitutionalist movement was still loud and clear in the ears of his audience, the minister stressed "women's indispensable responsibility at home" (家庭责任) and "the spirit of education by mothers" (母教精神) in his speech: "Nursing and teaching children should be the most natural and significant job for women; and if women had to pursue a career, it is more important for them to work within their communities than to work in governmental and political institutions."²⁹⁴

A talk like this, and especially when given by a minister of the Nationalist government during the War, immediately irritated women intellectuals. In the summary of wartime women's movement she wrote in 1941, Shen Zijiu criticised Minister Zhu Jiahua's view on women's political participation:

The KMT Central Organisation Department organised the KMT Women Leaders' Forum in Chongqing to discuss the future of women's movement in China. During the forum, the

²⁹³ Zhu, "Fuyun zhi huigu yu jinhou zhi xiwang", 717.

²⁹⁴ Zhu Jiahua, "Fuyun tongzhi yingyou zhi renshi" [The Cognition Women Activists Should Have], the Central Organisation Department, 21 April, 1941, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)*, 727.

current tasks of women's movement were assigned to us as follows: 1, to consolidate all levels of women's organisations; 2, to train women cadres; 3, to absorb women activists into the KMT and 4, to encourage women to make babies. So here allow me to conclude this forum—after women's organisations are consolidated, women members are well trained and enrolled in the KMT, the only task left for the rest of us is to have babies. And with regard to women's political participation, there is nothing to worry about as long as we have placed a few women to “decorate” the party like a vase used to decorate a room.²⁹⁵

Shen Zijiu's criticism of the KMT's gender discourse indicates that, after the KMT had utilised women's mobilisation to justify its political leadership and legitimacy during the War, women's equal political rights were quickly ignored if also denied by the Nationalist government. For the purpose of “national resistance”, women were encouraged to follow the leadership of the KMT and join the KMT's organisations; but in terms of their political participation and representation in a broader sense, women were deprived of their equal political rights and were advised to go home to have babies.

Shen Zijiu's personal experience further explains how she felt about and reacted to the idea of “good wife and wise mother”. When she was 21, Shen's first husband died of typhoid. Afraid of lifelong widowhood as demanded by traditional Chinese norms, she ran away from her husband's family and went to Japan to study. Her second marriage to a government official in Nanjing did not last any longer due to the different career paths they followed, so once again she left her husband's family to start her career in Shanghai.²⁹⁶ After two unsuccessful marriages, Shen Zijiu changed her view on women's roles at home: “If I had a husband again, I would like him to listen to me and obey my orders. I want him to help me to do things at home; after all, everyone is selfish.”²⁹⁷

Shen Zijiu's iconoclastic idea of “finding a house-husband who obeys her orders” contradicted the traditional value of “good wife and wise mother” and therefore was difficult

²⁹⁵ Shen, “Kangzhan sinianlai de funü yundong”.

²⁹⁶ Yang Zhenhua, “Nüjie yinghao Shen Zijiu” [Shen Zijiu the Example of Extraordinary Women], *Gujintan [Past and Present]* 4 (2007): 44-47.

²⁹⁷ Feifei, “Jiaru Shen Zijiu taoge zhangfu” [If Shen Zijiu Had a Husband], *Chunse [Spring Colour]* Vol. 3 Issue 7 (1937).

for many people to accept—it was supposed to be the other way round. Sarcasm was the first reaction to her challenge of conventional gender roles. A local journal in Shanghai made the following comment:

Ms. Shen has been married twice, against controversy and opposition. She could be called one of the most modern women of our time. However, if Ms. Shen was serious about her ‘finding a house-husband’ movement, she should set an example by finding such a husband for herself to convince us.²⁹⁸

Although the War of Resistance created opportunities for women intellectuals like Shen Zijiu to participate in national politics, contradictions between their gender roles and political roles did not simply disappear during the wartime period. By encouraging women to fulfil their conventional gender roles, the Nationalist government expected women to keep a distance from political activities and movements. The message of “women going home” sent by the Nationalist government upset Shen Zijiu: “The father of our country Sun Yat-sen had promoted ‘politics of the people’ to encourage every citizen to bear responsibilities in political reforms. But now, women’s political responsibilities, together with our political rights, have all been wiped away.”²⁹⁹

In 1941, a so-called “Education by Mothers Movement” was initiated among KMT women’s organisations whose ideologies strongly contradicted the principles of the constitutionalist movement in terms of women’s roles and responsibilities during the War. The Central Organisation Department urged all provincial and municipal KMT Women’s Communities to organise seminars on how women should nurse and educate children at home. The movement instruction sent from the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee to Yunnan Women’s Movement Committee states that: “At this very moment, education by mothers at home has become extremely important. The female members of our party should maintain the

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Shen, “Kangzhan sinianlai de funü yundong”.

good tradition of our nation, and continue the glorious history of Chinese mothers, so as to nurse and educate Chinese children.”³⁰⁰

Under the disguise of the “Education by Mothers Movement”, this new version of “good wife and wise mother” discourse stirred up protests among communists and left-wing activists who had been calling for women’s equal political rights and responsibilities during the wartime era. Zhou Enlai published an article in *Xinhua Ribao* to criticise the resurging “good wife and wise mother” discourse. He pointed out that any new version of “good wise and wise mother” would not justify this outdated discourse imbedded in the patriarchal Chinese society. Zhou challenged the call on “education by mothers” and suggested that the responsibility of childcare and education should be shouldered by the entire society rather than by women alone: “A society which cannot nurse and educate the next generation while making men and women shoulder equal responsibilities should never expect to have the right socio-political milieu, ideology and condition to make women do so at home.”³⁰¹

However, Zhou’s criticism was not able to reverse the altered social and political spaces for women’s political engagement in the wartime capital. Since the WAC ceased being the cross-party political platform for women intellectuals’ political engagement and the KMT tightened its central control over women’s political movements, women intellectuals’ organisation and movement cross party lines and political boundaries, as happened during the constitutionalist movement, did not happen again after the New Fourth Army Incident. The changes in women intellectuals’ political networks after the New Fourth Army Incident, as demonstrated in the cases of Liu Qingyang, Shen Zijiu, Xie Bingxin and Ni Feijun in this chapter, significantly influenced women intellectuals’ political identification with the CCP in the following years. While the majority of women intellectuals who had withdrawn from the WAC joined the SSCA Women’s Committee and the Democratic League, the political division between the right wing affiliated with the KMT Central Women’s Movement

³⁰⁰ Order from the Central Organisation Department to Yunnan Women’s Movement Committee, 3 November, 1942, YPA, 104-01-01.

³⁰¹ Zhou Enlai, “Lun xianqiliangmu yu muzhi” [On “Good Wife and Wise Mother” and the Job of Mothers], *Xinhua Ribao*, 25 September, 1942.

Committee and the left wing affiliated with the CCP South Bureau became inevitable within and among women intellectuals' political networks.

Conclusion

The spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement and networking were not fixed, rather, they shifted along with the rapidly changing social and political conditions in the early 1940s: First of all, the KMT persecution of left-wing activists after the New Fourth Army Incident forced women intellectuals from the CCP and the NSA to withdraw from the WAC, thus the WAC ceased being a cross-party platform for women's political engagement and communication. However, as the cases of Xie Bingxin and Ni Feijun show, personal ties played an important role in maintaining cross-party communication and networking in the wartime capital. Second, the departures, displacements and dislocations of left-wing women intellectuals during this period led to the long-term separation of some women's networks. Although Liu Qingyang and Han Youtong managed to resume their network within the SSCA Women's Committee after they had returned to Chongqing, Shen Zijiu was not able to exchange news with her friends in the mainland until the War finished. Third, with the new version of "good wife and wise mother" discourse resurging across the KMT institutions and organisations, the division between the KMT side and CCP side amongst women's political networks in Chongqing continued to increase. The political and ideological boundaries between women intellectuals affiliated with the KMT and those affiliated with the CCP South Bureau clearly appeared.

However, this is not to argue that the New Fourth Army Incident was the only cause of the shifting course of women intellectuals' political participation and identification. Distrust, miscommunication and antagonism had long existed within and among different women's organisations in Chongqing; the deteriorating conflicts between the KMT and the CCP in the early 1940s only accelerated the process of women intellectuals' political relocation, re-affiliation and re-identification. After the WAC reshuffled its leadership and membership, left-wing women intellectuals from the CCP and the democratic parties began to establish

new political institutions and frameworks. Established in 1940, the SSCA Women's Committee hosted most prominent women activists who had withdrawn from the WAC and the PPC; the Democratic League also provided a new political platform for women intellectuals to continue their pursuit of democracy and constitutionalism. These new organisations offered social and political support for women intellectuals to fight against the tightened central political control on the women's organisations and against the new version of "good wife and wise mother" discourse introduced by the KMT Central Organisation Department.

If we view the changes in women intellectuals' political networks in the early 1940s as an integral part of the fragmentary process of their political engagement and identification during the wartime era, rather than a simple reflection of the aftermath of the New Fourth Army Incident, we will be able to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of this "retrogression period". The altered spaces for women's political engagement after 1941 not only resulted in the dislocations and relocations of left-wing women intellectuals' networks, but also led to women intellectuals' re-identification with the competing political parties, the CCP in particular. Focusing on left-wing women's networks in Chongqing, my next chapter aims to reveal the successful but uneasy political realignment of left-wing women intellectuals within the SSCA Women's Committee and the China Women's Association, and to analyse the gradual power transfer from the KMT to the CCP within women intellectuals' political networks between 1941 and 1945.

Chapter 4

After the New Fourth Army Incident, Cao Mengjun, a NSA leader who maintained close connections with the CCP South Bureau, withdrew from the WAC. Together with women intellectuals such as Li Dequan, Deng Yingchao and Shi Liang, Cao established the SSCA Women's Committee, an organisation that accommodated most left-wing women intellectuals who had left the WAC after the Incident, and that enhanced the alliance between the CCP and the minor political parties in Chongqing. Therefore in the early 1940s wartime capital women intellectuals' political networks were, on the one hand, undermined by the deteriorating frictions between the KMT and the CCP, but on the other hand, restructured and strengthened through the growing political opposition against the KMT one-party dictatorship and its political terror. The common political ground shared between democratic intellectuals and communists in achieving democracy, constitutional governance and national resistance, together with the interconnected political networks across the CCP and the minor political parties, provided conditions for the CCP's united-front framework to progress and succeed in the 1940s.

Van Slyke has argued that a study of minor political groups and their relations with the two major contenders illustrates many of the themes that were so much a part of the history of the 1940s: the difficulties of a neutral position, the dilemmas of the Kuomintang, and the CCP's effective use of meagre resources.³⁰² Li Danke has also emphasised women activists' involvement in the CCP's effective underground work in wartime Chongqing.³⁰³ However, it was still unclear how the prominent women intellectuals, especially those who held multiple political affiliations in the KMT-controlled areas, identified themselves with a political "left

³⁰² Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends*, 169.

³⁰³ Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*, 131.

wing”, endorsed the CCP’s united-front framework and facilitated the political victory of the CCP over its major contender by the end of the War.

In this chapter, I use the term “left-wing networks” to refer to the social relations and political contacts formed between democratic intellectuals and communist activists who shared the same goal of terminating the KMT’s dictatorship and achieving national resistance as well as political democracy. Focusing on the political relocation of left-wing women’s networks within organisations such as the SSCA Women’s Committee and the China Women’s Association between 1941 and 1945, this chapter aims to demonstrate women intellectuals’ continuing political engagement and identification with various political parties and institutions, the CCP South Bureau in particular, after the New Fourth Army Incident. I argue that left-wing women intellectuals’ political identification with the CCP was an unsettled and fragmentary process during the wartime period, which reflects the uneasy political positioning of Chinese intellectuals between the two competing parties, but which also indicates the gradual power transfer from the KMT to the CCP among the minor political parties as well as among women intellectuals’ political networks. However, as the last section of this chapter will show, these growing left-wing women’s networks in post-1941 Chongqing still had their “periphery”: while many women leaders moved toward the centre, some women actors were marginalised and drifted to the periphery.

In the previous chapter, I have illustrated the interconnected personal relations and linkages among women intellectuals in Chongqing, and demonstrated how these personal networks helped maintain cross-party communication under the harsh social and political conditions in the 1940s. The SSCA Women’s Committee was such a political group that benefited from the intertwined personal friendships and relationships women intellectuals held across the KMT left wing, the CCP and the minor political parties. This chapter analyses the development of the SSCA Women’s Committee in the wartime capital in order to answer the following questions: How were left-wing women’s networks realigned and reintegrated within the SSCA in the 1940s? How did women intellectuals reacted to the influence of the CCP and the Soviet Union given the fast changing domestic and international political environment? How did the CCP South Bureau use the SSCA Women’s Committee as a

political platform to reinforce its united-front framework among women elites and intellectuals? And last but not least, what were the unexpected limitations and restrictions encountered by some women intellectuals within these left-wing networks?

The CCP united-front framework and the establishment of the SSCA Women's Committee

China historians have pointed out the particular political interests and ideas shared among democratic intellectuals and communists during the War. Lloyd Eastman has argued that “as individuals and members of the Democratic League, democratic intellectuals seemed to speak and many believed for all the right things: peace, justice, freedom, free participation to the government [...] and for the most part, the CCP was content to let the Democratic League speak its own voice.”³⁰⁴ Anthony Shaheen also believes that minor political parties and groups and the CCP were publicly united on fundamental issues: an inter-party conference, a coalition government, protection for civil liberties, recovery of the Japanese areas and opposition to American policy in China. *Xinhua Ribao*, the wartime organ of the CCP South Bureau in Chongqing, had printed news and statements of the League on a regular basis to become the Democratic League’s single most important outlet for its views and programmes, even surpassing the League’s own organs.³⁰⁵

Historians such as Lyman P. Van Slyke, Kui-Kwong Shum and Gerry Groot have all argued that the CCP’s strategic united-front framework within minor political parties and groups was one of the reasons why the CCP managed to obtain and maintain its power in the 1940s.³⁰⁶ Challenging the view that the United Front was forced upon the CCP by external circumstances, in particular the Comintern directives, Van Slyke believed that it was the CCP’s own decision to continue to use the strategy during the war years, especially when it

³⁰⁴ Lloyd Eastman ed., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949* (UK, USA, Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 275.

³⁰⁵ Shaheen, *The China Democratic League and Chinese Politics 1939-1947*, 306.

³⁰⁶ For more information, please see Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends*; Shum, *The Chinese communists' Road to Power*; and Groot, *Managing Transitions*.

foreseen the disintegration of the KMT-CCP alliance in the early 1940s.³⁰⁷ The “New Democracy” policy instituted by the CCP in 1940 thus made the theoretical preparation for the party’s further implementation of the united-front framework, as “both a bid for support (away from the KMT) and a statement of the kind of multi-class coalition regime that the CCP desires to lead and to expand.”³⁰⁸ Importantly, the united-front framework did not fail after the New Fourth Army Incident, as Kui-Kwong Shum argues, “the escalation of clashes between the KMT and the CCP actually propelled the CCP to adhere more closely to the united front in order to oppose its opponents.”³⁰⁹

Women intellectuals’ political networks across the CCP, the KMT and the minor political parties thus provide me with an interesting angle to further understand the success of the CCP’s united-front framework strategy in the KMT-controlled areas. The existing research on the wartime women’s movement has stressed the withdrawal of communist and democratic forces from the KMT-dominated institutions in the early 1940s, but not enough questions have been asked about the new platform, content and style of communication adopted by women intellectuals to recover their networks.³¹⁰ The continuous communication and networking among women intellectuals from the KMT left wing, the CCP and the minor political parties, which significantly enhanced the CCP’s united-front framework, have been left unexamined. As demonstrated by the development of the SSCA Women’s Committee, the changed social and political spaces in the early 1940s resulted in a new round of political engagement and identification among women intellectuals who stayed in Chongqing. And based on the united-front framework, the CCP South Bureau played an important role in integrating left-wing women’s networks while tightening its political ties with democratic intellectuals.

As a product of Chiang Kai-shek’s Sino-Soviet diplomacy to attract military support from the Soviet Union against Japan, the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association was originally

³⁰⁷ Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends*, 49 & 186.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 112.

³⁰⁹ Shum, *The Chinese communists' Road to Power*, 147.

³¹⁰ Xia, *Fun izhidao weiyuanhui yu kangri zhanzheng*.

established in Nanjing in 1935, which soon became a semi-governmental organisation supported by the so-called “pro-Soviet” camp (亲苏派) within the KMT. Sun Ke, the erstwhile KMT Legislative President famous for his flattering attitude towards the Soviet Union, was appointed by Chiang to lead the SSCA and to enhance the Sino-Soviet relations.³¹¹ After the Nationalist government had retreated, the SSCA was restructured in Chongqing in December 1938. Sun Ke maintained his position as the chairman of the association with Chen Lifu and Shao Lizi as his deputies, and among others, Feng Yuxiang, Guo Moruo, Wang Kunlun and Qu Wu were appointed as directors of the association.³¹²

The leaders of this organisation held various political statuses and intricate socio-political relations. Sun Ke, the only son of Sun Yat-sen, was educated in the U.S., and turned into a vociferous constitutionalist in the 1930s with enthusiasm for pro-Soviet diplomacy, despite his vacillating attitude toward co-opting the CCP during the War.³¹³ Balancing the power of Sun Ke and his “prince clique” (太子系) within the KMT was, first of all, Chen Lifu and his overwhelming C.C. Clique.³¹⁴ Shao Lizi, the Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union between 1940 and 1942, was an early member of the Marxist research group led by Chen Duxiu in Shanghai, then a KMT left wing supporting the KMT-CCP cooperation during the War. Feng Yuxiang, a previous warlord with his own political faction supporting Chiang Kai-shek to purge the CCP in 1927, was said to have “inclined toward allying with the communists” in the wartime period.³¹⁵ While Wang Kunlun and Qu Wu, networking both within the KMT and the CCP during the War, were politically more inclined toward the CCP and the minor political parties.

The leadership of the SSCA in Chongqing shows that, albeit restructured in Chongqing, the SSCA should be considered as a left-wing KMT organisation at best, with tentative if also

³¹¹ Gao Hua, *Geming niandai [The Revolutionary Era]* (Guangdong Renmin Press, 2012), 82-92.

³¹² *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 309.

³¹³ For more information, please see Gao, *Geming niandai*.

³¹⁴ Xiong Feiyu, “Zhongsu wenhua xiehui yu Chongqing kangzhanwenxue zouyi” [The Sino-Soviet Cultural Association and “National Resistance” Literature], *The Academic Journal of Chongqing Normal University* 4 (2012): 48-49.

³¹⁵ Benton, *New Fourth Army*, 115.

limited engagement with the Communist Party. Although most of its chief leaders might have shared the common goal of achieving national resistance and reconstruction, there was no sign that the organisation would side with the CCP during the War. However, the connections between the SSCA and the CCP South Bureau were more complicated than what SSCA leaders' political profiles could indicate. According to Yang Hansheng's memoir, over one third of SSCA members in Chongqing were actually undercover communists who kept one-way communication with Dong Biwu, Deng Yingchao, Zhang Xiaomei and Hua Gang, the leaders of the CCP South Bureau. The CCP also managed to infiltrate the SSCA with a network amongst democratic intellectuals such as Wang Kunlun, Cao Mengjun, Tan Tiwu and Qu Wu.³¹⁶

The establishment of the SSCA Women's Committee, in which left-wing women intellectuals revamped their political networks, reveals the intertwined personal relationships and friendships across the KMT left wing, the CCP and minor political parties and groups. Communist women leaders were never strangers to the SSCA: Deng Yingchao had been working closely together with those privileged "SSCA wives", who were also prominent women intellectuals during the War. Li Dequan, the wife of General Feng Yuxiang, Fu Xuewen, the wife of Shao Lizi, Cao Mengjun, the wife of Wang Kunkun and Ni Feijun, the wife of He Yaozu were all friends whom Deng had made in Wuhan and Chongqing. Even Sun Ke's concubine, the famous "second wife" Lan Ni, became Deng Yingchao's guest at No.50 Zengjiayan after she had moved to Chongqing with Sun.

Largely based on their social linkages and personal ties, these "SSCA wives" established a Women's Committee attached to the SSCA: Li Dequan was the chair of the committee; Fu Xuewen and Cao Mengjun were both vice chairs. Between 1941 and 1945, the SSCA Women's Committee provided an alternative political platform for left-wing women intellectuals in Chongqing, whose different political origins and affiliations were as follows:

³¹⁶ Xiong, "Zhongsu wenhua xiehui yu Chongqing kangzhanwenxue zouyi", 49.

Origin Affiliation	Shanghai	Nanjing	Beiping-Tianjin	Others
CCP	Peng Zigang	Cao Mengjun	Deng Yingchao Zhang Xiaomei Liu Yingyang Han Youtong	Hu Xiufeng Ni Feijun
Minor political parties and groups	Shi Liang Hu Ziyang Liu-Wang Liming	Cao Mengjun Li Dequan Tan Tiwu Tan Dexian Pu Xixiu Wang Feng	Liu Yingyang Han Youtong Lao Junzhan	
KMT	Zuo Songfen	Tan Tiwu	Lao Junzhan	Ni Feijun Lu Jingqing

Table 6: Members of the SSCA Women's Committee ³¹⁷

The table shows that the SSCA Women's Committee hosted the majority of left-wing women leaders who had withdrawn from the WAC in 1941. Apart from a few women intellectuals such as Ni Feijun, Hu Xiufeng and Lu Jingqing who were new faces to the group, the reminder of women intellectuals had known each other in the 1930s, whose original networks played important role in maintaining group contacts and restoring political connections after the New Fourth Army Incident. Liu Qingyang and Han Youtong, for instance, both resumed their political networks within the SSCA Women's Committee after they had returned to Chongqing from Hong Kong in 1942. However, compared with the NARC and the WAC, the SSCA Women's Committee only attracted a few KMT women leaders, despite congregating the majority of prominent CCP and NSA women leaders who had worked at the WAC. This change indicates that, while the political and institutional

³¹⁷ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 310.

division grew between women intellectuals affiliated with the KMT and those affiliated with the CCP, a strengthened political coalition between democratic intellectuals and communists started to dominate women intellectuals' political networks.

This is not to suggest that the SSCA Women's Committee had little connection with the KMT. Quite on the contrary, the establishment of the Women's Committee was based on the personal networks of those "SSCA wives" whose husbands held senior positions within the SSCA as well as within the KMT. As will be further shown in the following sections, it was because of these personal networks across the KMT left wing, the CCP and the minor political parties that the SSCA Women's Committee could continue as the only legally registered left-wing women's organisation active in wartime capital after 1941. However, because the Women's Committee provided left-wing women intellectuals with political and institutional support, its political activities were also seriously restricted in Chongqing due to the KMT vigilance against any non-KMT political organisations.

Cao Mengjun's network within the SSCA Women's Committee

Because the political network she had developed in Nanjing during the National Salvation Movement remained almost intact within the SSCA Women's Committee, there was no need for Cao Mengjun to familiar herself with most committee leaders and members. In 1930s Nanjing, Cao Mengjun and her husband Wang Kunlun had participated in the early rounds of negotiations with communists, which paved the way for the initiatives of the CCP to follow through the united-front framework during the War. The local women's NSA network in Nanjing had also benefited from the friendships and working relationships of Cao Mengjun, Li Dequan, Ji Hong, Hu Jibang, Wang Feng, Tan Tiwu and Tan Dexian. Now five years later in Chongqing, the same group of women intellectuals continued playing a pivotal role in restoring women's networks and activities under the SSCA Women's Committee. As the vice chair and the secretary-general of the committee, Cao Mengjun was the one in charge of the daily schedules of the committee, who sometimes received help from one or two assistants. The regular working agenda of the Committee was usually decided together by Li Dequan,

Cao Mengjun, Fu Xuewen and the communist leader Zhang Xiaomei. Deng Yingchao also attended meetings when she was in Chongqing.³¹⁸

The office building of the SSCA Women's Committee was on No. 198 Middle First Road in Chongqing (today's No. 162 on First Zhongshan Road, Yuzhong District). It was a two-storey house with a blend of Chinese and Western architectural features. The rectangle-shaped room occupied by the Women's Committee was on the first floor, one floor under the SSCA office. It was a nice and sunny room of thirty square meters. Another small room next door named "children's home" (儿童之家) was sometimes used by the Women's Committee to host activities for children. The sign on the door with the words "children's home" also helped hide the political status of the SSCA Women's Committee. Under the harsh political conditions, this place, above all, offered a private and peaceful space for women intellectuals in Chongqing to keep contacts and enjoy themselves: they met for tea parties, research seminars, political study and meetings; they organised forums on women's issues, film-screening receptions, Russian language classes and even a book fair themed on "Soviet women and children".³¹⁹

To develop the Women's Committee and to engage with wider audiences, Cao Mengjun decided to publish a new women's journal in Chongqing. As Chapter 1 has shown, the *New Women* society led by Cao in Nanjing and the *Women's Life* society led by Shen Zijiu in Shanghai had helped with the network development among women intellectuals during the National Salvation Movement. In 1938, the *New Women* society merged into the *Women's Life* society, and the journal *Women's Life* became an organ of the WAC in Wuhan and later on in Chongqing. As the chief editor, Shen Zijiu continued the publication of *Women's Life* in Chongqing together with Peng Zigang until she left the WAC in 1940. The journal was then handed over to Hu Naiqiu and Cao Mengjun only to be censored by the KMT after the New Fourth Army Incident.³²⁰ Launching a new women's journal then became an urgent

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid, 310-311.

³²⁰ Huang, "Fengyun suiyue—Shen Zijiu yu *Fun ü Shenghuo*", 60.

task for left-wing women intellectuals in Chongqing who sought to integrate their scattered political networks and resources after 1941.

However, after the New Fourth Army Incident women's political movements, organisations and publications were under strict control by the KMT. Due to the lack of political and financial support from the Nationalist government, it took Cao Mengjun and her colleagues over two years to find an office for their editorial team and to register the new journal. Only in 1943, this new women's journal named *Modern Women* (现代妇女) was finally launched as the organ of the SSCA Women's Committee. Using the same address as the SSCA Women's Committee—No. 198 Middle First Road—*Modern Women* was officially registered in Chongqing.³²¹ By publishing *Modern Women* and organising events pertaining to the Sino-Soviet relations and international affairs, Cao Mengjun and her colleagues tried to adapt their agenda to the shifted social and political spaces in post-1941 Chongqing in order to maintain the organisation and increase activities.

New focus and new effort under the harsh political conditions

Between 1941 and 1945 in Chongqing, left-wing women intellectuals used the SSCA Women's Committee as a political platform to enrich their knowledge of women's political positions and resistance activities in the Soviet Union. They also paid a special effort to initiate a trend of learning international affairs among women. The change of focus from women's political participation in national affairs to the women's movement in a world-war context, on the one hand, reflects the altered domestic spaces for women's political participation in the early 1940s. But on the other hand, it reveals women intellectuals' initiatives in stimulating women's political movements for emancipation, independence and democracy in a transnational dimension. In this sense, women intellectuals' political

³²¹ "Quanguo funü tuanti yilanbiao" [Complete List of Women's Organisations in China], documents filed by the Ministry of the Interior, March 1945, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao—minguo zhengfu juan (1912-1949)*, 858-859.

engagement went beyond the geographical space of wartime China and beyond the political space of “national resistance”.

In 1941, the SSCA Women’s Committee organised a photo exhibition to showcase the changes in Soviet women’s professional, political and social lives before and during the Soviet-German War (苏德战争 1941-1945).³²² Lenin was quoted in the introduction to the three hundred illustrations, which were organised into four sections namely politics, economy, education and academia to reflect the changed lives of Soviet women. Handcrafts and photos sent by Soviet children were also displayed in the exhibition together with those collected from refugee children living in the NARC nursing houses in Chongqing.³²³

It is not complicated or costly to establish public canteens, nurseries and kindergartens—no eloquent speech or ostentatious process was needed. However, these facilities can free women of their burden in families and help them catch up with men in public production and in social life; therefore they further help reduce the gender inequality women suffer.

—Vladimir Lenin

Impressed by the effort paid by both the Soviet government and Soviet women to women’s independence and equal opportunities in society, the chair of the SSCA Women’s Committee Li Dequan pointed out the significance of having such an exhibition for Chinese women:

The exhibition gives Chinese women a mirror to see ourselves in the future [...] These photos tell us that, like Soviet women, we can have kindergartens, public canteens and we can work in factories, farms, schools and governmental institutions. It is because of the effort made by the Soviet government and Soviet women that there are so many female political and military leaders, female scientists and technicians in the Soviet Union as showcased in these photos.³²⁴

³²² In German this war is known as the Eastern Front or Eastern Campaign of the Second World War.

³²³ An E, “Funü shenghuozhaozhan guanhou” [Review of the “Women’s Life” Photo Exhibition], *Zhong-Su wenhua* [Sino-Soviet Culture] Vol. 9 Issue 4 & 5 (1941): 187.

³²⁴ Li Dequan, “Sulian funü shenghuo zhaopian zhanlan” [The Photo Exhibition on Soviet Women’s Life], *Zhong-Su wenhua* [Sino-Soviet Culture] Vol. 9 Issue 4 & 5 (1941): 181.

The first exhibition caused a stir in the wartime capital. Both Li Dequan and An E published articles in the journal *Sino-Soviet Culture* (中苏文化) to cover this special event for women. The exhibition lasted for five days and attracted nearly 20,000 people in town. The SSCA Women's Committee then decided to take the exhibition on a tour in Nan'an, Lengshui and other districts of Chongqing.³²⁵

Organising such a tour of exhibitions required local support for venues, transportations, facilities and security. If not for the broad personal networks held by the leaders of the SSCA Women's Committee, it would have been difficult for a left-wing women's organisation to manage a touring exhibition around Chongqing in 1941. The CCP South Bureau alone could hardly accomplish such a task in the KMT-controlled areas without causing KMT's suspicion of the purpose of the exhibitions. However for Li Deyuan, the chair of the SSCA Women's Committee and wife of General Feng Yuxiang, one letter was enough for liaising with local KMT officials who could take care of the detailed arrangements. In order to organise one exhibition in Beibei district of Chongqing, Li Dequan wrote to Lu Ziyang, the influential local figure in charge of district planning and security in Beibei. In the letter, Li directly requested a spacious area in town to host a three-day event in order to benefit local female students.³²⁶

Although the exhibitions attracted a large audience who were curious about women's life in the Soviet Union, it had been an uneasy job for the SSCA Women's Committee to encourage women from different social classes in Chongqing to pay attention to political affairs and wars outside of China. It was noticed by An E: "Among the approximately 20,000 visitors to the photo exhibition, only less than 20% were women. It does not mean that men paid special heed to the life of Soviet women, but that Chinese women lacked the basic knowledge to understand political and international affairs, and they even had little interest in the social issues that actually related to themselves."³²⁷

³²⁵ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 311; An, "Funü shenghuozhaozhan guanhou"; Li, "Sulian funü shenghuo zhaopian zhanlan".

³²⁶ Letter from Li Dequan to Lu Ziyang, 8 November, 1941, CMA, 0081-0004-04935, 175.

³²⁷ An, "Funü shenghuozhaozhan guanhuo", 187.

Not only ordinary women in Chongqing had little knowledge of China's international relations during the War, but even well-educated women intellectuals found it difficult discerning China's true allies from a bewilderment of the involved war parties in the Second World War. In October 1940 the SSCA Women's Committee organised a women's forum on China's diplomacy. The invitation letter of the forum stated that: "The victory of the War of Resistance certainly depends on the strength of Chinese people, but it also depends on the foreign alliances that we can obtain—to ally with the U.S. and the Soviet Union or to follow the routes of Germany and Italy is going to be a choice that decides the result of our war against Japan. Therefore we need knowledge of wartime international affairs."³²⁸

However, the fast-changing international relations in the Second World War made it even harder for Chinese women to understand the stance China as well as Chinese women should take in the context of a world war. While women intellectuals of the SSCA believed that the Soviet Union was a reliable ally and a role model for the Nationalist government, the Soviet Union signed the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact, which impeded Sino-Soviet relations and resulted in the decrease of Soviet material aid to China.³²⁹ Due to the worsened relations between the Soviet Union and China, and the escalation of clashes between the KMT and the CCP, pro-Soviet activities in Chongqing gradually cooled down by the end of the year, while activities of the SSCA Women's Committee almost grounded to a halt. The situation only changed in early 1943 when the victory of the Soviet Union in the Battle of Stalingrad provided members of the SSCA Women's Committee with a special occasion for celebration.

On 30 January 1943, the SSCA Women's Committee hosted a social event at Chongqing Jialing Hotel to celebrate the Soviet victory in the Battle of Stalingrad and also to celebrate the friendship of women from different countries who were fighting together against the Axis. Together with the SSCA Women's Committee, another 13 organisations in Chongqing participated in the event, including the Sino-British Cultural Association, Sino-American

³²⁸ The invitation letter from the SSCA Women's Committee for the diplomacy forum, October 1940, CMA, 0053-0004-00170, 5.

³²⁹ For more information about the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact, please refer to Geoffrey Jukes, trans., *The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact: A Diplomatic History, 1941-1945* (UK, USA, and Canada: Routledge, 2004).

Cultural Association and the YWCA. SSCA women leaders Li Dequan, Deng Yingchao, Zhang Xiaomei, Cao Mengjun, Shi Liang, Liu Qingyang and Liu-Wang Liming all attended the meeting. Song Qingling sent her representative to the event; representing the WAC, Song Meiling's assistant Zhang Aizhen was also present. Invited to the event were also approximately 50 foreign women representatives from the allied nations, as well as Japanese anti-fascist women activists Verda Majo and Ikeda Sachiko.³³⁰ A couple of weeks later, when Fu Xuewen, the vice chair of the SSCA Women's Committee and wife of the Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union Shao Lizi, came back from the Soviet Union, the Committee hosted a second social event to welcome Fu. About 100 women leaders and elites in Chongqing gathered together again to listen to Fu Xuewen's report on the lives and experiences of Soviet women during the Second World War.

The activities of the SSCA Women's Committee in wartime Chongqing indicate the transnational exchange of ideas and movements among women in the context of a world war against Fascism. Matthew Hilton and Rana Mitter have argued that the transnational flow of institutions and ideas could actually serve to reinforce the authority of nation-state.³³¹ Through organising exhibitions, seminars and social events, women intellectuals of the SSCA Women's Committee not only pronounced their identification with international democratic forces to fight a world war against Fascism but also expressed their determination to achieve national resistance and liberation. A connection between Chinese women and women of the allied nations was established based on their common interests in women's emancipation, as an integral part of their nation's liberation and reconstruction.

Furthermore, these activities and social events show that, after the New Fourth Army Incident, left-wing women intellectuals in Chongqing were trying to revamp their political networks and maintain their public activities. By organising events and activities related to China's foreign affairs, the SSCA Women's Committee provided left-wing women intellectuals with an important platform to work together and to educate ordinary women in

³³⁰ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 312-13.

³³¹ Matthew Hilton and Rana Mitter, "Introduction" *Past & Present*, Supplement 8 (2013): 25.

Chongqing. However, the scope and influence of these events were limited, and could not compare with those organised by the WAC. This is because, first of all, focusing on Sino-Soviet relations and China's foreign affairs, the political topics the SSCA Women's Committee engaged with were highly conditioned by the domestic and international political environment in the 1940s. Second, although the SSCA Women's Committee was legally registered in Chongqing and endorsed by a group of prestigious women leaders, all of the assemblies and activities organised at No. 198 Middle First Road were subject to strict surveillance by KMT secret agents and the police. As the next section shows, when women leaders of the SSCA Women's Committee planned to organise a public event, they needed to provide detailed event proposals and guest lists beforehand for the approval of the Chongqing Municipal Police; on the day, they still had to worry about the police officers and secret agents sent to their event venue to spy on, or even interfere in their activities.

Local police and secret agents: The KMT's surveillance on the SSCA Women's Committee

In order to increase its impact on women's organisations, in particular to maintain and gradually expand its undercover networks in Chongqing, the CCP South Bureau had been trying to develop personal relations and friendships within the SSCA Women's Committee in the 1940s. The effort made by the CCP eventually paid off when the majority of women intellectuals who had withdrawn from the WAC joined the SSCA Women's Committee and affiliated with the CCP South Bureau. As the previous sections demonstrated, by relocating their networks from the WAC led by Song Meiling to the SSCA Women's Committee chaired by Li Dequan, left-wing women intellectuals in Chongqing were exploring new political resources while engaging with new political issues in both the national and transnational political context. However, the more closely their networks and organisations were affiliated with the CCP South Bureau, the less political and institutional support they could obtain from the Nationalist government.

From 1944 onwards, to curtail the development of communist networks among women intellectuals and students in the KMT-controlled areas, the Nationalist government expedited the expansion of KMT membership within local women's organisations. Orders were sent from the KMT Central Organisation Department to local KMT Women's Movement Committees, stressing the importance of increasing the percentage of female KMT party members to 25%.³³² On the one hand, the KMT tried to recruit young women, especially students who had just graduated from high school or university, to enhance the KMT's influence on local women's communities and organisations. On the other hand, the local police and secret agents conducted strict surveillance over the activities of left-wing women intellectuals, even when they had nothing to do with the CCP or Communism.

To organise an event in Chongqing, the SSCA Women's Committee had to send the event plan to the Chongqing Municipal Police for approval. In February 1944, Wu Weijing, an expert on the cotton industry was invited by the SSCA Women's Committee to give a seminar on the topic of "the present situation of textile production in China". To ensure that Wu's seminar would take place without any trouble, two days before the event, the SSCA Women's Committee sent a letter to the Chongqing Municipal Police requesting permission. The letter was filed by the Municipal Police in case of further investigation.³³³

However, not every event would get approved easily and not every day would go as planned. When Jin Zhonghua, the chief editor of the magazine *World Knowledge* came to give a talk at the SSCA Women's Committee, the event was interrupted by the local police.³³⁴ According to the report filed by the Chongqing Municipal Police, Mr. Jin's talk was scheduled on 21 March at 4pm, but the SSCA Women's Committee did not follow the

³³² Order from the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee to the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee (on behalf of the KMT Central Organisation Department), 15 February, 1944 and 4 November, 1945, YPA, 104-01-01.

³³³ The letter from the SSCA Women's Committee to the Chongqing Municipal Police about Wu Weijing's talk on "the present situation of textile production in China", 4 February, 1944, CMA, 0061-0015-03382, 32.

³³⁴ The report from Zhao Zhiliang to the Chongqing Municipal Police about the event organised by the SSCA Women's Committee, 28 March, 1945, CMA, 0061-0015-03382, 109.

necessary legal procedure to gain permission before the event. Two police officers were therefore sent to the meeting venue on the day to cancel the event. However, when the two officers finally arrived at the scene, it was already 3:30pm and the meeting hall was crowded with people awaiting the talk. The secretary of the SSCA Women's Committee explained to the officers that although some paperwork for the event had not been completed by the Committee, it would be very hard to cancel the event now seeing that the speaker and guests had already arrived. The vice chair of the Committee Fu Xuewen also came forward to stop the officers, arguing that Mr. Jin's talk "from Crimea to San Francisco" was purely about current international affairs, and more important, arriving for this talk today were the wives of high-ranking KMT officials, including the Mayor's wife Ni Feijun.³³⁵ The talk eventually started at 3:50pm with approximately 80 women and ten men in attendance. Afraid of irritating any VIPs, the two officers only audited the talk and then submitted a report to the Chongqing Municipal Police.³³⁶

As the civil conflicts between the KMT and the CCP continued, the end of the War against Japan did not put a stop to the KMT's surveillance of the SSCA Women's Committee. On 9 March 1946, to celebrate the first Women's Day after the War, the SSCA Women's Committee organised a tea party at No. 198 Middle First Road. Approximately 100 women leaders and activists attended the party, including Li Dequan, Deng Yingchao, Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun and the wife of Russian ambassador Petrov. It is unclear whether the SSCA Women's Committee had received approval for this women's assembly, but it is certain that six days after the event, an anonymous letter was posted to the No. 4 Branch of the Chongqing Municipal Police, which detailed the names of all the present guests and the starting and finishing time of the party.³³⁷

Since the writer of the letter addressed the SSCA as "our committee", it is possible that this was only a short report sent from the SSCA Women's Committee to the Municipal Police in

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ The anonymous letter sent to the No. 4 Branch of the Chongqing Municipal Police, 15 March, 1946, CMA, 0061-0015-01752.

accordance with the regulation for organising public events in Chongqing. However some features of this letter suggest its vagueness compared with the other letters sent from the SSCA Women's Committee. When the SSCA Women's Committee sent an official letter to request the police's permission for Wu Weijing's seminar, the letter was sent out two days before the event with both a clear signature and an official stamp. This anonymous letter, however, was sent out six days after the event with neither a letterhead nor any signature at the end. Further evidence is still needed to identify the writer of the letter. But it is possible that, just like in the WAC where undercover communists Feng Guangguan and Xia Yingzhe had been placed, a spy or informer was also placed inside of the SSCA Women's Committee to report their activities and agendas to the KMT.

The strict surveillance exercised by local police and secret agents on left-wing women's organisations had a significant impact on the style of communication and networking amongst left-wing women intellectuals in 1940s Chongqing. For women's networks that had direct or indirect connections with the CCP South Bureau, maintaining their political networks and contacts "underground" was not only a strategy for survival, but also a strategy for development. Women intellectuals of the SSCA Women's Committee, for instance, only contacted Deng Yingchao and Zhang Xiaomei through strict "one-to-one connection" (单线联系) with most their political networks unexposed to public. And "making friends" became an important strategy for network development applied by the CCP to enhance the party's organisation and influence among female students and intellectuals in the wartime capital.

For survival also for development: The CCP's Judian (据点) technique

Although the SSCA Women's Committee had strengthened the CCP's united-front framework among the most privileged left-wing women leaders and intellectuals in Chongqing, in terms of engaging with a wider audience and expanding networks among women from different social classes and professions in town, hosting a dinner party amongst the wives of ambassadors clearly could not serve the purpose. Due to the limited scale of most SSCA events and the strict surveillance conducted by the KMT, the SSCA Women's

Committee encountered difficulties expanding its political networks and reaching out to local women's communities in post-1941 Chongqing.

The “stronghold” technique (hereafter *Judian*) was therefore initiated by the CCP South Bureau to make new friends and new contacts within local women's communities. According to the document from the CCP South Bureau, *Judian* should neither be a party organisation nor a civil group of any kind with an official name, membership, structure or regular schedules. *Judian* was a new form of network between the communist party and the masses. Basically, within one district, a party member could establish a *Judian* with three to five friends, and each of the *Judian* members could further reach out to three to five new friends.³³⁸ There are some basic rules about establishing and maintaining a *Judian*:

1. One *Judian* should have no more than 5 members; there should be no affiliation between different *Judian*.
2. The new friends approached by *Judian* members must not contact each other; all levels of networking should be maintained by strict one-way connection.
3. A *Judian* network should be based on friendship and volunteering only [...] to maintain a *Judian*, one should first take good care of one's friends, for instance through get-togethers based on common interests. Study groups or research seminars should be prepared by only one person and the total participants should be no more than five. Meetings should not be too frequent—no more than once a month; and the meeting date must not be fixed.³³⁹

Comparable to the early communist cells formed before the first CCP Congress and the underground communist organisations in Shanghai during the Nanjing decade (1927-1937), *Judian* was a new networking technique applied by left-wing political activists in the KMT-controlled areas in the 1940s.³⁴⁰ A *Judian* network was based on the common interests shared among its members instead of political ideologies, norms or regular work agendas.

³³⁸ “Guanyu judian gongzuo de yanjiu tigang” [The Outline of *Judian* Strategy], the Youth group of the CCP South Bureau, 1944, source from *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 99-101.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Please see Van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade*, 57-81; Stranahan, *Underground*.

Judian members were not only communists but men and women from different political backgrounds and social classes. Therefore, instead of focusing on recruiting members into the CCP, the *Judian* technique aimed at building political connections and increasing the CCP's influence outside of the Party.

Mainly targeting intellectuals and students, the *Judian* technique complemented the CCP's united-front framework among left-wing women intellectuals in wartime Chongqing. In the early 1940s, by supporting the SSCA Women's Committee and the *Modern Women* magazine, the CCP South Bureau gradually established broad personal contacts and friendships among left-wing women intellectuals and increased its influence within female students and career women from all walks of life in Chongqing.³⁴¹ The networking strongholds of the CCP South Bureau were further incorporated into the existing networks of the SSCA Women's Committee to engage with local women's groups and communities. Although the CCP South Bureau only maintained "one-to-one connection" with the SSCA Women's Committee through Deng Yingchao and Zhang Xiaomei, their *Judian* networks were gradually established and expanded amongst local women intellectuals and activists in Chongqing by the end of war.

Starting in the second half of 1942, small study groups, reading societies and women's forums flourished in the capital again, and by the end of 1943, there were already more than a dozen women's *Judian* networks in Chongqing affiliated with the CCP South Bureau.³⁴² Women intellectuals were motivated to meet every week or fortnightly, especially if they had the same occupation, shared similar interests, or simply lived close to each other. During these get-togethers, brochures and other printed matters were spread for discussions on women's issues and current political affairs.³⁴³ More important, although these new *Judian* networks were connected with the CCP South Bureau, they were not established for the purpose of promoting communist ideology. Instead, as Groot argues, the CCP advocated democracy and constitutionalism to appeal to non-proletarian classes and bourgeois

³⁴¹ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 386.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

groups.³⁴⁴ Both the form and the content of these discussions were flexible to attract women participants from different social, political and professional backgrounds. The fact that these women members met more frequently than “once a month” as suggested by the rules of organising *Judian* also shows the flexibility and adaptability of this technique in developing political networks among local women.

Because of the growing personal networks within the SSCA Women’s Committee and the expanding *Judian* networks across local women’s communities, women intellectuals in Chongqing were able to maintain flexible but effective political connections with the CCP South Bureau. By the end of the War, these left-wing women’s networks were already integrated for the purpose of protesting the KMT dictatorship and promoting political democracy. On 11 February 1945, the SSCA Women’s Committee organised a Chinese New Year’s party to welcome back Li Dequan, who had gone to the warzone to visit Chinese soldiers fighting on the front line of Guizhou and Guangxi. The SSCA also warmly received intellectuals who retreated from Hunan and Guangxi due to the Japanese Ichi-Go Campaign (the Battle of Henan-Hunan-Guangxi).³⁴⁵ At the New Year’s party, women intellectuals discussed the worsened situation of war for China after the Ichi-Go Campaign, and exchanged their views on the current political affairs. Only two days after the event, *Xinhua Ribao*, the organ of the CCP South Bureau, published “the statement of women in Chongqing on current political situation” to speak on behalf of the women intellectuals who attended the New Year’s Party:

One of the main causes of today’s crisis is the lack of political democracy. Since there is no political democracy, people have no right to participate in national affairs, real talents have no opportunity to contribute to the government, while human and material resources could not be mobilised for national resistance, and different political parties and factions could not unite under the government to contribute their ideas [...] The central government has promised to convoke the National Assembly, to terminate political tutelage and to implement constitutional governance as soon as the War finishes. Therefore we urge the

³⁴⁴ Groot, *Managing Transitions*.

³⁴⁵ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 386-387.

government to immediately invite different parties and groups to discuss national affairs together, to reach a consensus with people, to return the freedom of speech, of the press, assembly and association to people. In today's movements for democracy and national resistance, we women must take a great effort and participate in different work, so as to achieve national resistance and reconstruction.³⁴⁶

This statement was signed by 104 women leaders and intellectuals in and out of the SSCA Women's Committee, who later became the founding members of the China Women's Association (CWA). The majority of these women intellectuals were non-partisans or from the minor political parties and groups, although documents collected from the CCP South Bureau state that some crucial sponsors of the CWA were undercover communists, who avoided signing the statement in order to protect their political networks.³⁴⁷ As the founding statement stressed, the CWA was born with a women's movement for democracy, constitutionalism and for women's equal political rights. The establishment of the CWA, to a large extent, shows the integration of left-wing women's political networks in Chongqing as a civil opposition against the KMT's dictatorship and as political alliance supported by the CCP's united-front framework by the end of the War.

The China Women's Association: Forming a left-wing women's alliance

The China Women's Association was officially established on 15 July 1945, only one month before the Japanese surrender to the Allies. The board of directors comprised 39 women leaders in Chongqing, of whom the majority were also directors of the SSCA Women's Committee. Li Dequan, the previous chair of the SSCA Women's Committee, was elected as the chair and the executive director of the CWA. Cao Mengjun and her *Modern Women* magazine also played an essential role during the transition for left-wing women's

³⁴⁶ "Chongqing funü dui shiju de zhuzhang" [The View of Chongqing Women on the Current Affairs], *Xinhua Ribao*, 13 February, 1945, source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1937-1945)*, 840-842.

³⁴⁷ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 387

political networks from the SSCA Women's Committee to the CWA. By the time the CWA was established, *Modern Women* had already published 6 volumes and over 30 issues in Chongqing, with a mature editorial team and numerous contributors ready to participate in political movements for democracy after the War of Resistance.³⁴⁸

The smooth transition from the SSCA Women's Committee to the CWA in 1945, similar to the transition from the NARC to the WAC in 1938, indicates the integration and institutionalisation of women intellectuals' political networks, and also reveals the maturation of a political leadership among women intellectuals through the long process of their political engagement and identification. In 1938, Song Meiling and KMT women leaders played the key role in establishing the WAC as a cross-party platform for women's participation in national resistance. However in 1945, it was Deng Yingchao and Li Dequan, women leaders from the CCP and the Democratic League, who voiced women's claim for democracy, constitutionalism and equal political rights.

Although the CCP South Bureau played a crucial role in cultivating and connecting women's networks in wartime Chongqing, it did not immediately pronounce its leadership within the CWA, at least not in public. Among the 39 directors to the CWA, only Zhang Xiaomei and Wu Quanheng were from the CCP South Bureau. Du Junhui, Peng Zigang and Han Youtong were undercover communists affiliated with minor political parties and groups. The political and social backgrounds of the rest of women leaders were extremely diverse: Shi Liang, Liu Qingyang, Cao Mengjun, Liu-Wang Liming, Hu Ziyang and Zhong Fuguang were all women leaders of minor political parties and groups; Ni Feijun, Zuo Songfen, Tan Tiwu and Zheng Ying were affiliated with the KMT despite their involvement in left-wing women's organisations; Zhou Zongqiong and Rao Guomuo were local businesswomen who had provided financial support to the CCP South Bureau in the 1940s; Bai Wei was a well-known female writer whilst Bai Yang was a rising film star in wartime Chongqing who

³⁴⁸ "Jinhou funü gongzuo yingdang zenyang zuo" [How to Manage Women's Work in the Future], *Modern Women* Vol.6 Issue 5 (1945), source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1945-1949)* [Historical Materials of Chinese Women's movements (1945-1949)] (the Institution of Women's Study, 1991), 1-5.

later starred in *The Spring River Flows East*, a famous film produced in 1947 which revealed the trials and tribulations in the heroine's life over the eight years of wartime period.³⁴⁹ The CWA network, albeit connected with the CCP South Bureau, clearly was not dominated by communists or overwhelmed by the ideology of Communism.

The victory of the War of Resistance and the peace negotiation between the KMT and the CCP in 1945 did not stop the KMT from inflicting political terror on its political opponents. As previously demonstrated in this chapter, the SSCA Women's Committee was still under strict surveillance by the Chongqing Municipal Police after 1945. Therefore in post-war Chongqing, the CWA still operated as a half-private organisation with only part of its senior leaders known to the public. Its internal organisation and membership remained underground. In order to distract the attention of KMT agents from the unexposed political relations and networks within the CWA, women leaders such as Lao Junzhan, Cao Mengjun, Shi Liang and Liu Qingyang continued participating in public events organised by the WAC and other KMT organisations.³⁵⁰ Between 1945 and 1946 in Chongqing, except for accepting the previous members of the WAC and the SSCA Women's Committee, the CWA controlled its new membership very strictly. Any potential candidates had to be recommended by at least two old members, and to be accepted, they also needed to be interviewed by relevant sub-groups before the final decision being made by the board of directors. By early 1946, there were about 25 sub-groups formed in the CWA with approximately 350 members in total, the majority of whom were still upper-class women intellectuals.³⁵¹

The activities of the CWA started along with the growing political movements for peace and democracy among Chinese intellectuals after the War of Resistance. Suzanne Pepper suggests that it was the intellectual milieu in which the student anti-civil war movement was able to develop, seeing that "a political liberal climate was quite firmly established among the

³⁴⁹ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 387.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid, 387-388.

intellectuals, if not among the political leaders, by the late 1940s.”³⁵² This “intellectual milieu”, was also important to women intellectuals’ continuous movement toward peace, democracy and women’s rights after the War.

On 17 November 1945, the CWA warned Chinese women of the still frustrating post-war political situation facing them: “Three months after Japan’s surrender, the people in China are still enduring chaotic politics, inflation, economic recession and an expanding civil war; we therefore urge Chinese women to protest against the Civil War together and to give our own suggestions to the government.”³⁵³ On 9 January 1946, one day before the First Political Consultative Conference (政治协商会议), the CWA hosted a tea reception at the SSCA and invited more than ten delegates of the Political Consultative Conference to discuss the urgent issues that concerned women after the War. This special event had been advertised in newspaper ahead of time to encourage women from all walks of life to participate in the discussions on the day.

According to the report published in *Modern Women*, not only CWA leaders but also many ordinary women in Chongqing participated in this event with enthusiasm. By 9am the two-storey house of the SSCA on Middle First Road was already crowded with over 100 women attendees: there were school principals, teachers, writers and office administrators who took the day off for the event; there were also students who skipped morning classes and housewives who escaped babysitting to be able to attend. Some of them were prominent and experienced women leaders since the 1930s, while some looked much younger and obviously just became an activist during the War.³⁵⁴ The delegates of the Political Consultative Conference, namely Ye Jianying, Dong Biwu and Deng Yingchao from the CCP, Shen Junru, Zhang Shenfu and Luo Longji from the Democratic League, Chen Qitian and Yang Shuming

³⁵² Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle 1945-1949* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 133.

³⁵³ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 393.

³⁵⁴ “Zhongguo fuyunshi shang bupingfan de yiye” [An Extraordinary Page in the History of Women’s Movements], *Modern Women* Vol.7 Issue 1 (1946), source from *Zhongguo funü yundong lishi ziliao (1945-1949)*, 89.

from the Youth Party, Shao Lizi from the KMT, and non-partisan delegates such as Hu Lin and Guo Moruo arrived one after another by 10 am.

The report then describes the heated discussion among the present CWA leaders: without any tedious introduction or ostentatious opening remark, the WAC chair Li Dequan expressed her feeling directly, “We are very happy today!” She stood up and her face was glowing with excitement, “in the past, we women had few chances to voice our opinions on politics, but today we are going to talk about the miserable political position of Chinese women in the past centuries.” The chair then pointed out that “the purpose of the Political Consultative Conference is to achieve peace and democracy, so that the government can be elected by the people and women can enjoy their equal rights and shoulder equal responsibilities.” Following Li Dequan’s talk, Cao Mengjun further articulated women’s basic claims to political and electoral rights, career opportunities, social security and healthcare for mothers and children. She emphasised that, after the War, the right to freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and of association should also be the basic rights of women: “At the moment we women activists do not even have the freedom of sitting together to discuss our own issues. We are either interrupted by the police or spied on by suspicious people eavesdropping at the window.” It was almost noon when Liu Qingyang, Shi Liang and Zhong Fuguang shared their insights on what kind of resolutions women had been expecting the Political Consultative Conference to achieve in the post-war years.³⁵⁵

The delegates on stage were all impressed by the political enthusiasm showed by the present women leaders, activists and the audience. Delegate Hu Lin frankly stated that it was the first time for him to speak to so many women, and it was also the first time that he realised women had such an in-depth understanding of national affairs.³⁵⁶ The meeting lasted from 10am to almost 2pm, only the KMT delegate Shao Lizi left early for another appointment he had on the day. When Shao Lizi asked for the chair’s permission to leave, Li Dequan and many women activists tried to persuade him to stay longer and invited him to say a few words before leaving. With a hail of applause from the audience, Shao Lizi promised

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 89-97.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

that, “The cease-fire will work this time; we do have means to make it work this time!” However, choosing their words carefully, most of the delegates only made general promises of involving women in national politics and realising women’s rights in the future. These promises did not satisfy the audience. In the middle of the meeting, a note from the audience was passed on to Li Dequan, and Li read it aloud to the delegates on stage:

We are teachers of many poor children who were separated from parents during the War. We tell our children not to lie but why does the government keep lying to these children? They were told that there will be no more wars but the Civil War has just started. I hope that everyone on stage today will be responsible for what you have promised, stop the Civil War immediately and let these poor children go back to their mothers.³⁵⁷

With active interactions between the audience and the delegates, the discussion was still in full swing and no one seemed to be hungry or tired. Delegate Guo Moruo therefore started his talk with a well-intentioned joke about the lively atmosphere in the room, “Ladies, do we only have high-sounding words in the mouth but no food in the belly?” The whole room burst into laughter. Although women leaders and the audience would like to stay longer to continue their discussion, the event had to be finished by 2pm so that the delegates could leave for another meeting scheduled for them.³⁵⁸

Judging from women’s discussion at this event, Chinese women intellectuals, unlike what Guo Moruo’s joke indicates, were not just mouthing high-sounding words. In the face of the enduring chaotic politics, economic recession, inflation and an expanding civil war, they had detailed their political claims for cease-fire and for democracy, and matured their organisations and networks to support their political movements. For these women intellectuals who had just experienced the Second World War in China, “democracy” was neither the propaganda used by the Nationalist government to obtain political credits and support within the international community, nor was it the political panacea that could be prescribed to heal China’s diseases overnight. Rather, “democracy” meant women’s rights to freedom of meeting in public and discussing political affairs, it meant fairness and equal

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 97.

opportunity for women at work, it meant women's leadership in this continuous fight to change the nation's and their own future, and last but not least, it meant the chance to veto the Civil War and bring back peace to women and children.

The uneasy but successful network transition from the WAC to the SSCA Women's Committee and then to the CWA further demonstrates women intellectuals' continuous political engagement and organisation in the 1940s. More important, it reveals the changes in the geographical, social and political spaces for women intellectuals' networking since the War had broken out, which resulted in the integration of left-wing women's networks and the enhancement of the CCP united-front framework in the hinterland. While the KMT women leaders dominated the WAC and worked on resuming the Central Women's Department under the control of the KMT, The SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA provided left-wing women intellectuals with a new political framework to maintain their networks and to continue their political activities under the harsh conditions after the New Fourth Army Incident.

However, this is not to indicate that every educated woman who had a passion for political participation was able to find her footing in the political and intellectual circles in Chongqing. Although they were inclusive, extensive and diverse, the political networks of women intellectuals in wartime Chongqing still had their "periphery". As the next section demonstrates, women intellectuals, unlike their male peers, encountered many unexpected limitations and restrictions in their networking due to the fact that they were not only valued for their political activism but also judged by their personal relations and gender identities.

From the centre to the periphery: The cases of An E and Bai Wei

As discussed in the last chapter, women intellectuals' political networks were never immune to departures, displacements and dislocations, the reasons behind which were many: Xia Bengying left the WAC because of the lack of financial and political support, Liu Qingyang and Shen Zijiu went to Hong Kong due to the KMT's persecution of left-wing women activists, Xie Bingxin moved into in a cottage in the Gele Mountain in order to enjoy

the maximum of tranquillity during the political turmoil. However, for some women intellectuals, their isolation from the intellectual and political circles in wartime Chongqing was not a result of the tough political situation but of their controversial personal relationships and gender identities.

An E and Bai Wei, two well-known women writers and left-wing activists from the Shanghai League of Left-Wing Writers (hereafter *Zuolian* 左联), encountered different difficulties remaining socially connected and political active in the wartime capital. An E, a female playwright and a founding member of the NARC in Wuhan and Chongqing, was eventually forced to leave Chongqing because of her ‘scandalous’ relationship with the famous songwriter Tian Han. Bai Wei’s personal situation in Chongqing was not better. Having lived in straitened circumstances and exhausted by her controversial relationship with the poet Yang Sao, Bai Wei eventually drifted out of women intellectuals’ political networks, despite her name appeared on the membership list of the CWA.

When An E and Tian Han fell in love in the early 1930s, Tian Han had already been engaged. His fiancée Lin Weizhong was studying in Southeast Asia at the time. An E soon got pregnant, but Tian Han did not break off his engagement and still married Lin Weizhong. With her heart broken, An E later married Ren Guang, Tian Han’s best friend, and lied to Tian Han that their child had passed away.³⁵⁹ The complicated relationships between the four of them finally imperilled both of the two marriages. In 1937, An E and Ren Guang were officially separated after Ren Guang had left for France. And on the boat from Shanghai to Nanjing, An E met Tian Han again.³⁶⁰

For An E, a young and energetic writer with an elitist sense of mission, the romanticised idea of “national resistance” and “women’s emancipation” should be realised through women’s courageous pursuit for a free nation as well as for free love. Her meeting with Tian Han at the moment of national crisis further encouraged her to resume the relationship through working together with Tian Han for national resistance. After she had told Tian Han

³⁵⁹ Sheng Ying, “An E nianpu 1905-1976” [The Chronicle of An E 1905-1976], *Xinwenxue shiliao* [New Literature and History Materials] 3 (2006): 187.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 190.

the truth about their child, they got back together, albeit Tian Han was still married to Lin Weizhong. With Tian Han, An E came to Wuhan in 1938 and helped found the National Association for Refugee Children and then the couple migrated to Chongqing to continue their work for national resistance. Between 1939 and 1940, An E spent more than half a year in Hubei to report on soldiers' and women's life in the battlefield of the Fifth War Zone.³⁶¹

However, despite An E's political activism and achievements, her relationship with Tian Han, a married man who happened to be famous, was questioned and criticised within the small community of intellectuals. Tian Han's wife Lin Weizhong, also a well-educated woman, spread rumours in town to defame An E. Lin also handed out flyers about her husband's affair at the entrance of the SSCA, right before a meeting which Tian Han and An E both attended.³⁶² The role of "mistress" tarnished An E's political identity as a female leader fighting for the liberation of women and the nation. The lack of support and understanding within the intellectual circles resulted in her decision to leave the bustling wartime capital. In 1942, she and Tian Han moved to Guilin, a small and quiet town in Guangxi province.³⁶³ Although the couple tried to stay in a low profile in Guilin and Kunming, journalists still continued pursuing stories about this 'famous' affair.

Gail Hershatter has noted that, in the Republican era, sexuality and sexual behaviour were discussed as practices in the need of modernisation.³⁶⁴ However, An E's affair with Tian Han was too complex to be judged according to the vague standards of "modernity" in the wartime society. For An E, her pursuit of love with a married man did not contradict the strong feminist intentions expressed in her literary works; but for many others, her willingness to betray her own husband and to become Tian Han's mistress was still against the traditional values of Chinese society and therefore was shameful and unforgivable. The history of her marriage with Ren Guang and her relationship with Tian Han was explored and discussed in newspapers, with strong sense of criticism and disdain against her:

³⁶¹ Ibid, 193-194.

³⁶² Ibid, 199.

³⁶³ Ibid, 196.

³⁶⁴ Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, 44.

The famous composer An E and the songwriter Tian Han are officially living together now, but Tian Han's wife is obviously still Lin Weizhong. Although Lin Weizhong is trying every means to fight for her marriage, what has been left for her is only a useless title "Tian Han's wife" [...] No one knows how exactly An E got involved with Tian Han, but it seems that now she is finally able to live with Tian after her own husband has been killed in battle in Northern Anhui.³⁶⁵

In the face of criticism and slander, An E was calmer than Tian Han. After Lin Weizhong published an open letter in a newspaper maligning Tian Han and An E, Tian Han was furious and immediately replied with his article "Declaration and Self-defence" in Shanghai *Xinmin Bao* (新民报). But An E's response was far less personal. For her, the reaction of people to her relationship with Tian Han was more than understandable in a society where it was a sin for a woman to have an affair and it was also a sin for her to be a mistress. The criticism An E had received was not simply against the affair, but also against the fact that, instead of playing the role of victim in this affair, she seemed to insist on pursuing a relationship with a married man despite other people's views. Like Shen Ziji's call for a house-husband, An E's unconventional mind and behaviour triggered the criticism toward her in the wartime society.

An E explained to journalists that her experience only revealed one of the many social problems in China during its social transformation.³⁶⁶ However, in her later article "I Miss Bai Wei", written in 1948 about her friend Bai Wei, a female writer who also failed to please "some privileged people" during the War, An E expressed the grievances and prejudices women intellectuals had to endure for their personal choices and expressed her admiration for Bai Wei's courage.³⁶⁷

An E and Bai Wei had known each other since they both worked at *Zuolian* in Shanghai. Although during the War they both lived in Wuhan and later in Chongqing, they never became close friends. In An E's words, Bai Wei intimidated people with her honesty,

³⁶⁵ "Tian Han yu An E de jiehe" [Tian Han and An E in a Relationship], *Qingchun Dianying* [Youth Cinema] Issue 1 (1947).

³⁶⁶ Sheng, "An E nianpu 1905-1976", 200-201.

³⁶⁷ An E, "Wo xiang Bai Wei" [I Miss Bai Wei], *Chuangshi* [Genesis] Issue 13 (1948).

frankness and stubbornness therefore not everyone would get to know the real Bai Wei. Bai Wei was full of political enthusiasm for action and sacrifice while trying to defend her own moral standard. So An E said, “I am ashamed that I could not become a close friend to Bai Wei, although I do admire her so much! I am ashamed that I could not be as brave as she is.”³⁶⁸ In Wuhan, Bai Wei repeatedly wrote to the CCP Wuhan Office, insisting on going to Yan’an. After her request had been rejected because of her poor health condition, she went to Guilin as a special reporter for *Xinhua Ribao*.³⁶⁹ In 1940, when Bai Wei finally managed to move to Chongqing, she had neither a job nor a family supporting her, and her only social connection was with the All-China Resistance Association in Literary and Art Circles.³⁷⁰

The protracted war deepened the recession and worsened the living and working conditions for women. Survival became a matter of paramount importance, even for many women intellectuals who went to Chongqing with ambitious career plans. Poverty overshadowed Bai Wei’s daily life, as her best friend Liu Haini remembered:

Bai Wei had to move to the suburbs of Chongqing because she was too poor to rent a room in town. She was too poor to hire an old maid to help her with cooking, sewing and cleaning. Sometimes she did not even have enough money for a simple meal [...] We tried to find a job for her, but in the end, only the position “office help” was available for her. It was rather shameful and pathetic for a well-educated intellectual like Bai Wei. She graduated from college in Japan and taught at university; she was a writer with many published works and proudly made her contribution to the New Cultural Movement. But how is she rewarded by society now? She can only get a job as an office help—a position even more humble than store clerk.³⁷¹

What frightened Bai Wei were not only the straitened circumstances, but also the lack of respect and understanding for a woman’s personal choice in the society. Bai Wei had her chance to get married to obtain at least some financial support. Her ex-boyfriend Yang Sao,

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Li Changqin, “Bai Wei nianpu 1894-1944” [The Chronicle of Bai Wei], *Journal of Xiangnan University* Vol. 33 Issue 4 (2012): 10.

³⁷⁰ Liu Haini, “Ji Bai Wei” [About Bai Wei], *Yuekan [Monthly]* Vol. 2 Issue 2 (1946).

³⁷¹ Ibid.

the poet who had hurt her with his numerous affairs and infected her with sexually transmitted diseases, asked for her forgiveness when she was struggling alone in Chongqing.³⁷² All of their friends believed that the flames of love were going to be reignited between them. People who had known about them thought that Bai Wei was a lucky woman if Yang Sao truly wanted to marry her, because “she is not young anymore, so cannot be appreciated by someone else.”³⁷³ However, feeling that her pride was injured and her moral sense was denied once she became older and in need as a woman, Bai Wei declined Yang Sao’s offer. She told Liu Haini in 1946: “I still loved Yang Sao, but something in my mind stopped me, without hesitation. I do not need to tell people why, because they all judge women with their vulgar and despicable mentality.”³⁷⁴ However, living in poor health and without any income in Chongqing’s suburbs, Bai Wei became more and more isolated from women intellectuals’ political networks. Although her name appeared on the CWA membership list, she did not participate in any activities run by the organisation in Chongqing. In An E’s view, “Bai Wei did not have any network or social circles—it is not because she was rejected, she simply did not want one.”³⁷⁵

As revealed in the cases above, the “periphery” of networks existed not only in terms of women intellectuals’ political locations and affiliations, but especially with regards to their personal relations and gender identities. The War of Resistance enlarged the spaces for women intellectuals to network across political parties and to engage in national politics, but the political mobilisation for “national resistance” did not transform Chinese society overnight. Women intellectuals, although determined to defend their social independence and political rights, could not avoid juggling between their political roles in public and their gender roles in private. The interactions and contradictions between their political and gender identities, at an individual level, complicated the process of women intellectuals’ political engagement and identification during the War. Through this process, there were actors such

³⁷² Li, “Bai Wei nianpu 1894-1944”, 6.

³⁷³ Liu, “Ji Bai Wei”.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ An, “Wo xiang Bai Wei”.

as Cao Mengjun, Liu Qingyang, Shi Liang and Li Dequan who moved toward the centre of the network and reached high positions within the CWA after the War, and there were also actors such as An E and Bai Wei who drifted to the periphery.

Conclusion

The altered social and political space in post-1941 Chongqing resulted in the political relocation and realignment of women intellectuals' political networks. Despite the harsh political, social and economic conditions, the majority of women intellectuals who had withdrawn from the WAC managed to recover their political networks within the SSCA Women's Committee. Against the strict surveillance by the Chongqing Municipal Police, the CCP South Bureau applied *Judian* as a networking technique in order to enhance its connections with the SSCA Women's Committee and to propel network development among local women's communities. The establishment of the CWA by the end of the War not only reflects the integration of left-wing women's networks, but also indicates the gradual but steady power transfer from the KMT to the CCP in directing women's political movement for resistance and democracy. However, not every left-wing woman intellectual found it easy to maintain their political networks and activities in wartime Chongqing. An E and Bai Wei's cases indicate that, besides the harsh political and economic conditions, women intellectuals also had to endure grievances and prejudices because of their personal relationships and gender identities.

This chapter has further illustrated the complex network of social and political relations maintained between the democratic forces and the Communist Party, which, not only galvanised women intellectuals' cross-party communication from the mid-1930s onwards, but especially influenced their political affiliation and identification after the New Fourth Army Incident. However, despite the political relocation of most left-wing women's networks after 1941, to convert to communism was still an uneasy decision for most women intellectuals, although holding a neutral position was equally difficult. The SSCA Women's Committee led by Cao Mengjun and the CWA led by Li Dequan, despite their connections

with the CCP South Bureau, provided left-wing women intellectuals with a political framework to continue pursuing their political goals without claiming their commitment to communism.

Furthermore, the enhanced networks among left-wing women intellectuals reciprocally reinforced the united-front framework and enabled the CCP's effective use of the meagre social and political resources after the New Fourth Army Incident. Given communists and democratic intellectuals seemed to speak and many believed for the same right things, it is not surprising that the CWA served the purpose of the CCP's united-front framework in attracting members from the minor political parties and groups. In the name of "women's unity and friendship" (妇女联谊), the CWA established their local branches firstly in Kunming, Beiping, Shanghai and Nanjing, and later in Chengdu, Guilin and Hong Kong after the War. Rather than being a centralised national women's organisation controlled by the CCP, the CWA was actually a flexible political workshop through which the CCP reached out to local women's organisations and communities in different cities.

As Arne Westad argues, by late 1946, a number of sons and daughters from middle-class intellectual families had become the main link of the Chinese Communist Party to the cities after the Second World War.³⁷⁶ During the Civil War, the CWA branches assisted the underground CCP to engage with female students and workers, housewives and career women in cities and towns, thus the CCP could obtain access to local social and political resources in the KMT-controlled urban areas. The first local CWA branch was founded in Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan Province, well-known as the "fortress of democracy" under Long Yun's governance during the War. In the next chapter, I will focus on women intellectuals' political networks in Kunming to illustrate the different patterns showed in local women's political engagement and identification during the wartime era.

³⁷⁶ Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 78.

Chapter 5

In 1943, the CCP sent Hua Gang and Zhou Xinmin, two undercover communist leaders and intellectuals, to Kunming to help with the establishment of the Yunnan branch of the Democratic League. Using the pseudonym “Lin Shaohou”, Hua Gang, the previous chief editor of *Xinhua Ribao*, accepted a lectureship in sociology at Yunnan University. Zhou Xinmin, a law graduate from Meiji University in Japan, was also expected to develop the CCP’s united-front framework in Kunming while teaching at Yunnan University.³⁷⁷ Zhou Xinmin wrote to his old friend Li Wenyi, a female communist activist who had participated in the National Salvation Movement in Hubei, suggesting that she come along to help develop left-wing women’s organisations in Kunming. Li Wenyi therefore moved to Kunming in 1943 and stayed in the city until the War finished.³⁷⁸

Kunming, well-known as “the fortress of democracy”³⁷⁹ during the War, was another important destination of Chinese intellectuals’ wartime migration besides the wartime capital Chongqing. In 1938, Peking University, Tsinghua University and Nankai University were moved to Kunming and together the three most prestigious Chinese universities formed the National South-western Associated Universities (hereafter *Xi’nan Lianda* 西南联大). Hundreds of prominent scholars and intellectuals of the country then moved here to preserve

³⁷⁷ *Yunnan shengzhi* 54, 13.

³⁷⁸ Li Jiayi, “Huiyi wugu Li Wenyi” [My Memory about My Aunt Li Wenyi], *Zongheng* [Length and Width] 09 (2001): 41-43.

³⁷⁹ *Yunnan shengzhi* 54, 326; some scholarship refers to the National South-western Associated Universities as the “fortress of Democracy”, please see R. David Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China* (Harvard University Asia Centre, 1981), 177.

the best education resources and to maintain their academic communities.³⁸⁰ However, unlike Wuhan, Chongqing or Yan'an, Kunming was neither the national capital of any political party nor a centre of propaganda for national salvation and resistance during the War of Resistance. As a city under the control of the local governor Long Yun, Kunming was far from the KMT authority in Chongqing and not directly threatened by warfare. The social, cultural and political spaces available for women intellectuals' political participation in Kunming were, therefore, both similar to and different from that in wartime Chongqing.

Concentrating on the most influential women leaders who migrated to Wuhan and later to Chongqing along with the Nationalist government, the previous chapters have examined the locations, relocations and dislocations of their political networks. Since the majority of these women intellectuals held high positions within various national institutions and women's organisations during the War, they largely maintained their political networks and social relations at the national level, despite the fact that they did try to engage with local women's societies and communities. In this chapter, my analysis of local women intellectuals' political networks in Kunming reveals different but equally complex patterns of the political engagement, communication and identification carried out by local women intellectuals. Focusing on the political interactions between local women's networks in Kunming and the central political authorities in Chongqing, this chapter aims to show both the similarities and the variations in women intellectuals' wartime political engagement exercised in different regions and at different levels.

Unlike in Shanghai or Nanjing where a complex network of social and political relations had emerged across different political parties before the War broke out, in Kunming both the KMT and the CCP only started recruiting members from the local girls' schools and colleges in the late 1930s and early 1940s, while the minor political parties and groups did not even establish their own women's groups until 1944. To develop women's networks at a local level without direct political and financial support from central headquarters became the main

³⁸⁰ *Yunnan shengzhi* 54, 13. For more information about *Xi'an Lianda*, please see John Israel, *Lianda: A Chinese University in War and Revolution* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

challenge for women intellectuals working for different political parties in Kunming. However, the student and intellectual networks growing within *Xi'nan Lianda* and across the various local universities, colleges and schools provided political parties and groups in Kunming with rich resources to build their political connections and increase their influence. The story of Li Wenyi, who stayed in Kunming between 1943 and 1945 and eventually established the Kunming branch of the CWA in 1945, therefore complements our understanding of Chinese women's participation in the "national resistance" as a national narrative.

The political and intellectual network in Xi'nan Lianda

Li Wenyi came to Kunming with an unclear political position, which limited the political and financial support she was able to get, but which also pushed her to fully explore the available local resources for network development. As early as 1926, Li Wenyi had joined the CCP, and then she worked side by side with Deng Yingchao and Cai Chang at the CCP's women's committee during the National Revolution. In 1932, she was suddenly expelled from the CCP as a political dissident, simply because she had escorted a friend to Hangzhou without asking for the party's permission.³⁸¹ When the War of Resistance broke out, Li participated in local women's resistance organisations in Hubei and then joined women intellectuals from across the country for the defence of the provincial capital Wuhan in 1938. Although she had realised that her being expelled from the CCP was due to the Party's internal struggle and personal politics, she still waited for her opportunity to be accepted by the CCP again. Therefore, when she received a letter from the communist leader Zhou Xinmin asking for her help with establishing left-wing women's organisations in Kunming, she immediately decided to go to Kunming in 1943.³⁸²

As the provincial capital of Yunnan Province, Kunming could hardly compare with the wartime capital Chongqing in terms of the available political and human resources for

³⁸¹ Li, "Huiyi wugu Li Wenyi", 41.

³⁸² Ibid, 43.

political parties to cultivate power and grow networks. Lacking a national organisation such as the People's Political Council to institutionalise intellectuals' political engagement, the political networks of democratic intellectuals in Kunming were often imbedded in academic communities and student bodies in universities. *Xi'nan Lianda*, for example, brought together a group of prominent intellectuals who had moved to Kunming during the War. When Hua Gang, Zhou Xinmin and Li Wenyi arrived in Kunming between 1942 and 1943 to strengthen party liaisons for the CCP, they first targeted the social and political networks within the academic community of *Xi'nan Lianda*.

Many *Xi'nan Lianda* academics such as Tu Chunan, Fei Xiaotong, Pan Guangdan and Luo Longji had already been involved in the minor political parties and groups in Kunming.³⁸³ Even the Yunnan governor Long Yun himself was famous for his sympathy with and tolerance of democratic movements in the 1940s. Long Yun not only secretly joined the Democratic League, but also supported the development of the minor political parties and groups in Yunnan. With Long Yun's help, Tang Xiaoming, son of the late military governor and warlord of Yunnan Tang Jiyao, established a political group affiliated with the Youth Party. Both Long Yun and Tang Xiaoming maintained good relationships with the prominent academics in *Xi'nan Lianda*.³⁸⁴ In this case, when Hua Gang and Zhou Xinmin started teaching at Yunnan University, it was convenient for them to develop the united-front framework based on the existing political networks among *Xi'nan Lianda* intellectuals.

Similar to women's political networks in Shanghai and in Chongqing, which were intertwined with the networks of their male peers within the NSA and the SSCA, Li Wenyi's political network in Kunming, from its inception, also shared social and political resources with those of her male colleagues. With Hua and Zhou's help, the South-western Academic Research Community (西南学术研究会) was established in *Xi'nan Lianda* in 1943. Starting as a secret academic society, the South-western Academic Research Community consisted of around ten privileged intellectuals in Kunming. Prominent scholars Wen Yiduo, Wu Han,

³⁸³ Israel, *Lianda*, 350-351.

³⁸⁴ "Feng Sutao huiyilu" [Memoir of Feng Sutao], *Yunnan wenshi ziliao xuanji 31* [Yunnan Cultural and Historical Materials Vol. 31] (Yunnan Renmin Press, 2001), 61.

Chu Tunan, Fei Xiaotong, Feng Sutaο, Pan Guangdan, Zeng Zhaolun and Wen Jiasi as well as the two undercover communist intellectuals Hua Gang and Zhou Xinmin were the original members of the Community. After Li Wenyi had arrived in Kunming, she was soon absorbed into the Community as the only female member.

Composed of these eminent intellectuals who held different political affiliations and cherished the passion for saving the nation from its crisis, the Community was never purely an academic society. The Community held secret meetings fortnightly at the residence of Tang Xiaoming, but the focus of these meetings was not entirely on academic research. According to Feng Sutaο's memoir, at the beginning their meetings were about academic research, but as the gathering proceeded, they soon changed their focus from academic fields to current political affairs.³⁸⁵ Tang Xiaoming generously hosted these "academic" activities at his home and treated these intellectuals with respect, although he never participated in discussions perhaps due to his sensitive political identity. Given Tang Xiaoming's personal relations with Governor Long Yun, it is very likely that Long Yun was also involved in this secret society, through which he was further introduced to the undercover communist leaders such as Hua Gang.³⁸⁶ One year later when the Federation of Democratic Parties was renamed as "Democratic League" (DL) and started to accept individual members, the members of the South-western Academic Research Community, except for Hua Gang, established the Yunnan branch of the Democratic League.

Because of Li Wenyi's participation in the South-western Academic Research Community, she became the first female member of the DL in Kunming.³⁸⁷ However, her job to establish left-wing women's organisations in Kunming had to start from scratch. As the following sections will show, being a DL member did not bring Li Wenyi the kind of political and institutional support she needed for developing women's networks in Kunming. Worse still,

³⁸⁵ "Feng Sutaο huiyilu", 61-62.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Li Wenyi, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi" [Memories about Women's Movements in Yunnan during the War of Resistance], source from *Yunnan funü yundongshi ziliao* 2 [The Historical Materials of Women's Movements in Yunnan Province Vol. 2] (Yuannan funü yundong lianhehui press, 1983), 1.

her dubious political relations with the CCP through Zhou Xinmin and Hua Gang helped very little in tightening her connections with the local underground communist groups.

Starting from scratch and going without support

Located on the very periphery of the areas of conflict during the War, Kunming did not take the brunt of Japan's war threat like Shanghai did in the early 1930s. The development of local women's organisations for national salvation and resistance in Kunming started only after the War had broken out. The Yunnan Provincial Women's Community (云南省妇女会) led by Zhang Bangzhen and the Kunming Municipal Women's Community (昆明市妇女会) led by Zhang Jinghua were the only two official KMT women's organisations in the region, with the majority of their members recruited from the KMT Youth Corp (hereafter *Sanqingtuan* 三青团)³⁸⁸ and from Kunhua Girls' middle school.³⁸⁹

Although the CCP South Bureau also sought to expand the united-front framework in Kunming to enhance the Party's influence on local students and intellectuals, before Li Wenyi arrived, the scale of left-wing women's organisations in Kunming had not been comparable to that in Chongqing. According to Zheng Suyan, an underground communist who stayed in Kunming between 1939 and 1940, only four CCP women's groups were active in Kunming, namely the female teachers' group, the career women's group, the female workers' group and the student group based in Kunhua Girls' Middle School, with approximately twenty underground communist members all together.³⁹⁰ And unlike in Wuhan and Chongqing where prominent communist women leaders such as Deng Yingchao and Meng Qingshu could publicly join national women's organisations, in Kunming, the activities of local communist women's groups remained underground. Since direct contact

³⁸⁸ Here it refers to the KMT Three People's Principle Youth Corp or *Sanqingtuan* for short, founded in 1938 in Wuchang.

³⁸⁹ The list of women's organisations in Yunnan Province, July 1947, YPA, 44-02-393.

³⁹⁰ Zheng Suyan, "Huiyi Kunming dangneiwai funügongzuo qingkuang" [Memory about the Women's Work in and out of the CCP in Kunming], autumn 1939 to November 1940, source from *Yunnan fun üyundongshi ziliao* 2, 15.

with any party members who were not in the same women's group was strictly forbidden, when Zheng Suyan left Kunming in 1940 she still did not know most of her communist colleagues' names.³⁹¹

According to Zheng Suyan, communist women's work in Kunming developed slowly, and her political network was largely confined to local female students. When Zheng was sent to Kunming by the communist guerrilla in Western Hubei for medical treatment, she was informed that the local underground communist group would contact her and guide her work. However, she had been staying at home for three months before a contact person was finally sent from the local underground CCP. The new task assigned to Zheng Suyan in Kunming was to help develop the united-front framework in the "white area" (白区, KMT-controlled areas), and to report to the CCP South Bureau regularly through a secret messenger named Ma Ziqing. As Zheng Suyan remembered, her secret reports were hidden in the book *The Story of the Western Wing*³⁹² (*Xi Xiang Ji* 西厢记) and were taken by Ma from Kunming to Chongqing.³⁹³ In public Zheng Suyan had a job teaching evening classes at the YWCA, and using this job as a cover, she was able to make some friends within the YWCA as well as in Kunhua Girls' middle school. The majority of women members who joined her women's group were young female students and alumni from upper-class families. As will be shown later, some of these young students joined a communist women's group because they were, as rebellious adolescents, curious about rather than dedicated to communism.

Against this backdrop, when Li Wenyi arrived in Kunming in 1943, the political and institutional support she could rely on for developing a left-wing women's network was very limited. The primary task for her was to make a living and some friends in this city. She found a job at the High Court of Yunnan Province and made her first friend Yang Suhui, a career woman working at the High Court. Gradually, Yang Suhui introduced her friends and

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² *Xixiang Ji* (西厢记) is one of the most famous Chinese dramatic works, written by Wang Shifu, the famous playwright in the Yuan Dynasty.

³⁹³ Zheng, "Huiyi Kunming dangneiwai funügongzuo qingkuang", 16.

old classmates to Li Wenyi. Among these colleagues and friends, Li Wenyi formed a women's reading group, which attracted over thirty regular members in half a year.

In order to formalise and further develop her reading group, Li Wenyi started to seek institutional and financial support from the local YWCA. At the time, the Kunming YWCA had four departments, namely the Adult Women's Department led by Li Jie, the Young Women's Department led by Zhang Runyuan, the Administrative Department and the Female Students' Department, and it also had a women's dormitory. Although the majority of YWCA leaders in Kunming were "the very rich and powerful ladies in town who believed in Jesus Christ", they were not against women's movements for national salvation and democracy.³⁹⁴ The director-general Zhong Shaoqin had participated in the National Salvation Movement in Shanghai and was an acquaintance of Shi Liang and Shen Zijiu. Zhang Runyuan and Li Jie were both supportive of women's activities for realising political democracy.³⁹⁵ Li Wenyi therefore decided to affiliate her reading group with the Adult Women's Department of the YWCA. She first turned to her colleagues Li Gongpu and Zeng Zhaolun at the DL Yunnan branch for advice. Through Li and Zeng, she then contacted the YWCA director-general Zhong Shaoqin, who eventually agreed to take in Li's reading group and provide a meeting room for her use.

After Li's reading group had been merged with the YWCA, it was renamed as "Career Women's Community" but its membership remained the same. Old friends still met regularly at the YWCA to read and study together. Topics such as "the worries of young women", "the issues of career women", "love and marriage" and "women's duty during the War of Resistance" were popular with the participants. However, unlike many wealthy and powerful career women in 1930s Shanghai and Nanjing, most members of Li Wenyi's Career Women's Community had a fulltime job and evening housework to attend to, therefore they could only attend the reading group immediately after work. After the office of the YWCA had been moved far away from the town centre, many members had to quit the evening

³⁹⁴ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 2.

³⁹⁵ Li Wenyi, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi* (Dongfang Press, 2004), 214-215.

gatherings due to the difficulty of travelling from work to the YWCA and then back home in a rather short period of time.³⁹⁶

Li Wenyi's experience of organising her first women's group shows that, compared with Chongqing, the political, financial and institutional resources available to women for the purpose of political networking were less plentiful in Kunming. Apart from the two poorly organised KMT women's organisations, which I will examine later in this chapter, the YWCA, technically a religious organisation, was the only institution that Li Wenyi could rely on for her network development. Given the "after-work" reading group organised by Li Wenyi mainly concerned "the women's issue" and its membership highly depended on friendships and alumni networks among local women, the scope of their political engagement and networking was limited compared with that in Chongqing. It might go too far to argue that women intellectuals' political participation was stagnant in the geo-political periphery of wartime China where "national resistance" was more of political propaganda in newspapers than a daily practice by people in town. Yet it is evident that, without the kind of institutional and political support that women leaders received from the WAC, the PPC and the CCP South Bureau, it was more difficult for women intellectuals and elites in Kunming to take the initiative to engage in national politics.

Unlike in Chongqing where the political networks of different women's organisations overlapped with each other, very few members of Li Wenyi's reading group joined the women's committee of the DL Yunnan branch in 1944, and Li Wenyi's political links with the underground CCP and the DL were even unknown to her reading group. To form a connection with the YWCA, Li Wenyi used her personal relations with Li Gongpu and Zeng Zhaolun, both famous intellectuals teaching at *Xi'nan Lianda*. Since Li Wenyi's political status at the DL was also unknown to the YWCA, it is very likely that Li Gongpu and Zeng Zhaolun approached Zhong Shaoqin through their personal network rather than through the political network of the DL. In this case, Li Wenyi's network development among local women intellectuals did not rely on any political party or institution, and her engagement

³⁹⁶ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 3.

with local women's organisations was initiated in a personal manner through the intellectual community in Kunming. In terms of political activities, bold and symbolic actions, such as dashing onto stage to slap a politician as women suffragists did in 1912,³⁹⁷ or booing a foreign feminist off stage as Shanghai women activists did in 1936, were not repeated in Kunming. Instead of giving eloquent speeches and making provocative statements, women intellectuals in Kunming were inclined to adopt pragmatic and effective methods in maintaining and developing their networks, especially when political and financial resources became increasingly meagre at the local level as the War continued.

Engagement with local women's organisations in Kunming

Lacking a cross-party platform such as the WAC to bridge women intellectuals from different political backgrounds, official cooperation of any kind between Li Wenyi's Career Women's Community and local KMT women's organisations in Kunming seemed difficult if not impossible. From the viewpoint of local KMT women leaders in the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community and the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, although Li Wenyi's political status as a former communist member and a current DL member was unknown to them, she certainly could not fit in the KMT's inner political and social circles. Whilst for Li Wenyi and her friends in the Career Women's Community, it was already difficult for them to trust those "religious" YWCA ladies, let alone to co-opt KMT women leaders. However, the local accounts tell a different story: due to the inadequate political and financial resources available for local women's organisations during the War, interdependence between women's organisations with different political affiliations was also manifest at the local level, and coordinated events between KMT and non-KMT women's organisations were even more common in Kunming than that in Chongqing. Li Wenyi's first contact with local KMT women leaders was made through the preparation for Women's Day celebration.

³⁹⁷ David Strand, *An Unfinished Republic: Leading By Word and Deed in Modern China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2011), 42.

In Kunming, most of women's activities and events in public, such as the celebration of Women's Day, were organised by the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community, an organisation under the control of KMT women leaders Zhang Bangzhen, Long Meiyong and Xia Tongwen.³⁹⁸ The same group of KMT women leaders also led the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, one of the local branches of the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee. Apart from female members of the KMT and *Sanqingtuan*, local intellectuals and elites such as the principal of Hongshan Normal School Zhang Jinghua, the principal of Kunhua Women's Vocational College Xiong Yunjun and the Principal of Kunhua Girls' Middle School Qin Shuzhen all held positions in these two KMT women's organisations.³⁹⁹ Zhang Jinghua told Li Wenyi that Women's Day celebration had become a political routine in Kunming: "Nothing new had been planned by the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community other than publishing an article in the KMT organ *Zhongyang Ribao* (中央日报) and organising a celebration meeting at the KMT Yunnan Provincial Party Headquarters."⁴⁰⁰

The local communists, who attempted to challenge the KMT's leadership within women's organisations in Kunming, had all failed. In 1942, the underground CCP in Kunming tried to transform the Women's Day celebration into a women's mass gathering in order to encourage the participation of non-KMT women intellectuals and students in town. However, this suggestion was considered by the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee as the CCP's conspiracy to introduce their "three-thirds system" (*San-san zhi* 三三制) to the women's movement: "The purpose of this so-called *San-san zhi* is to consider the KMT, the CCP and the rest of minor political groups as three equal parties engaging with the women's movement. Women candidates for future national elections should also come from the three parties."⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ The survey of women's organisation in Yunnan Province, 1946, YPA, 104-01-03.

³⁹⁹ The membership of women's organisations in Yunnan Province, July 1947, YPA, 44-02-393.

⁴⁰⁰ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 4.

⁴⁰¹ The secret order from the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee to the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, 6 March, 1942, YPA, 104-01-02.

Two days before the Women's Day celebration in 1942, a secret order was sent from the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee to the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, warning women leaders in town of the CCP conspiracy:

We were informed that the 'wicked party' (奸党) has established their own plans for the Women's Day celebration. Their aim is to apply the *San-san zhi* to the women's movement, to summon meetings and organise gatherings among the masses, and to include women of all classes in their activities [...] It is not hard to imagine the conspiracy of the CCP [against the Nationalist government] and its political ambition. The Yunnan Women's Movement Committee should report to the KMT and to the KMT only. Your organisation should be cautious [of the CCP conspiracy].⁴⁰²

Although Li Wenyi had no direct political connection with the CCP in Kunming, her political identity and position still put her at a disadvantage in terms of developing a left-wing women's network in Kunming. On the one hand, as a veteran communist activist expelled from the CCP, Li Wenyi lacked the access to local KMT women's organisations. On the other hand, as the first and the only female member of the DL Yunnan branch in 1944, she also lacked a broad and mature network of social and political relations among women intellectuals in Kunming. In this situation, the Women's Day Celebration in 1944 would open the first door for Li Wenyi to engage with local women's organisations and groups in public.

In order to organise an event on a small budget but to attract as many audiences as possible, Li Wenyi and her friends at the Career Women's Community decided to collect articles to publish a Women's Day special issue in newspaper. They first turned to the YWCA for support but only to be informed that no one would be available for editing and no fund was available for the publication. Li Wenyi and her friends then contacted the major Kunming newspapers in town by themselves. To their surprise, *Saodang Bao* (扫荡报), a KMT daily initiated in Nanjing, agreed to offer space for 5,000 to 7,000 words and *Guomin Ribao* (国民日报) also agreed to offer space for 7,000 words. Li Wenyi eventually sent the main article to both *Saodang Bao* and *Guomin Ribao*, and kept the rest of articles for publishing in the two

⁴⁰² Ibid.

popular local newspapers, *Yunnan Ribao* (云南日报) and *Zhengyi Bao* (正义报). The only newspaper she did not contact was *Zhongyang Ribao*, the KMT party organ, because “it was the territory of the KMT Provincial Women’s Community, where we’d better not step in.”⁴⁰³

The next step was to approach the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women’s Community to discuss plans for the Women’s Day celebration. Li Wenyi asked Zhang Jinghua to propose her ideas to the Community. The Yunnan Provincial Women’s Community also planned to publish a Women’s Day commemorative issue and was calling for contributions. Li Wenyi therefore offered the article she wrote for *Guomin Ribao* to a KMT women’s journal instead. Li’s friendly gesture received positive response from the KMT side: the Career Women’s Community was invited by the Yunnan Provincial Women’s Community to celebrate the Women’s Day together at the KMT Yunnan Party Headquarters. Li was also trusted to write the opening speech for Madame Long (Gu Yingqiu, the wife of Governor Long Yun).⁴⁰⁴

Notwithstanding the involvement of Li Wenyi’s Career Women’s Community, the KMT still dominated the preparation for the Women’s Day celebration in 1944. As the day of celebration approached, it was alleged by the Yunnan Women’s Movement Committee that both Madame Chiang and Madame Kung (Song Ailing, the wife of Kong Xiangxi) were coming to Kunming for the celebration.⁴⁰⁵ Local KMT women’s organisations therefore pressed on the preparation in order to impress the two most powerful ladies of the country. The most prominent women intellectuals in town, such as the Harvard graduate Prof. Qian Ruisheng, the female city senator Xiong Yunjun and the local PPC delegate Zhang Bangzhen were all invited to give speeches on the day. Topics for discussion such as “women and constitutional governance” and “the Education by Mothers movement” were prepared; banners were hung in the street showing passionate slogans finished with exclamation points: “Self-consciousness, self-strengthening!” (自觉自强), “Women’s inner revolution!” (妇女内心觉醒), “Participate in national resistance and reconstruction!” (参加抗建), “Achieve the

⁴⁰³ Li, “Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi”, 3-4.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁰⁵ Madame Kung Song Ailing, the elder sister of Song Meiling and the wife of H.H. Kung, the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank of China during the War.

Three Principles of the People!” (实现三民主义), “Long life the KMT!” (国民党万岁) and “Encourage your husband and son to join the army! (鼓励丈夫儿子当兵)”.⁴⁰⁶

It is apparent that local KMT women’s organisations were using the Women’s Day celebration to support the wartime policies and propaganda of the Nationalist government. By promoting “constitutional governance” and “the Education by Mothers movement”, women intellectuals in Kunming also tried to synchronise their agenda and action with that in Chongqing. Local women in Kunming were excited about the Women’s Day in 1944 for one more reason: they were able to meet the famous Madam Chiang in person. Most of Li Wenyi’s friends at the Career Women’s Community were eager to attend the celebration meeting, not because they were determined to support the KMT’s wartime policies, but simply because they would like to see what Madame Chiang looked like. Unfortunately, Song Meiling did not show up at the meeting on the day.⁴⁰⁷

Besides their cooperation with KMT women leaders, Li Wenyi and her Career Women’s Community also decided to attend the party organised by the YWCA in the evening, despite the YWCA’s earlier rejection to help them with publishing a Women’s Day issue. However, the party did not end as how Li Wenyi and her friends had expected. Confusion started when Ms. Wu Yunwen, the principal of Enguang Primary School, started to sing the praises for American and English women’s patriotism. Ms. Wu continued to criticise female students in Kunming for being lazy in study, running after the fashion and losing themselves. The female students present were irritated by Ms. Wu and the party soon descended into a chaos. Feeling embarrassed by the situation, Li Wenyi had to invite the Chorus of *Xi’nan Lianda* to add some performances just to help maintain the order of the party.⁴⁰⁸

Notwithstanding the occasional confusion and disorganisation during the “Women’s Day” celebration, Li Wenyi successfully engaged with local women’s organisations and introduced her women’s group, the Career Women’s Community, to the social circles of women intellectuals and students in Kunming. In her memoir, Li Wenyi mentioned that the reason

⁴⁰⁶ Preparation for the “8 March”, 1944, YPA, 104-01-09.

⁴⁰⁷ Li, “Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi”, 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 4-5.

she cooperated with KMT women's organisations was for the sake of united-front framework, but what she did not mention was the support and publicity her group badly needed and expected to obtain through organising a coordinated event with local women's organisations. The fact that she not only sought support from the local YWCA, but also from the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community further indicates the lack of political and financial resources available for women's network development in Kunming. There is no evidence that Li Wenyi had established any connections between the Career Women's Community and the underground communist groups available on campus and in factories. As the next section shows, although Li Wenyi's cooperation with the local YWCA and KMT women's organisations was not easy, it was more difficult for her to organise an independent women's organisation in Kunming.

Seeking independence in the face of financial interdependence

Publication and event organisation increased the popularity of Li Wenyi's Women's Career Community among women intellectuals and students in Kunming, but at the same time they resulted in the envy of women leaders at the YWCA. Because the commemorative article published in *Saodang Bao* was under the name of Women's Career Community rather than that of the YWCA, the YWCA complained that the publication was done without their permission and warned their members of Li Wenyi's "real intention". Antagonisms increased after the two groups disagreed with each other on which speakers to invite for the International Career Women's Day on 13 March. Li Wenyi and her friends had planned to invite several foreign scholars and a Chinese expert specialising in Chinese ethnicities in Yunnan, but the YWCA ignored Li's suggestion and eventually invited Pan Guangdan to talk about eugenics and Zhang Yintang to talk about geography and human civilisation.⁴⁰⁹ It is difficult to ascertain who picked the more pertinent subjects for the occasion of International

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 5.

Career Women's Day, but it is clear that the opinion of Li Wenyi's Career Women's Community weighed little in the decision-making process of the YWCA.

The ambivalent position of the Career Women's Community after it had merged with the YWCA made Li Wenyi and her friends reconsider the future of their women's group. On the one hand, they all expected to achieve independence from the YWCA. But on the other hand, institutional and financial support was still necessary for their network development. Some of Li's friends were determined to split with the YWCA: "We'd rather be dismissed than compromise!"⁴¹⁰ But most members only agreed on changing the name of their group to proclaim their independence, presumably as a kind of protest against the YWCA's domination. "Joy Group" (乐群团) was finally selected as the new name, as it sounded less provocative and non-political it could reduce the YWCA's suspicion. However, as this section demonstrates, this newly gained "independence" did not change the relations between the YWCA and Li Wenyi's reading group, but rather undermined the rightful status of the latter in participating in public assemblies and activities.

As John Israel argues, between 1943 and 1945, the Nationalist government's inability to stop the Japanese from occupying what was left of free China sparked increasing discontent among Chinese intellectuals with the political, social and economic status quo.⁴¹¹ In Kunming, the attention of intellectuals was drawn to reforming the current domestic and international political system. Despite the new name "Joy Group", the main activity of Li Wenyi and her friends remained research and discussions on political and international affairs. Books such as *Popular Philosophy*, *Popular Economics*, and *History of Social Development* were studied by the group together with the up-to-date political theories such as "On New Democracy" and "On Coalition Government" by the communist leader Mao Zedong. Similar to the seminar "From Crimea to San Francisco" that had been organised by the SSCA Women's Committee in Chongqing, a group discussion on "the San Francisco Issue" was

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁴¹¹ Israel, *Lianda*, 365.

also organised by Li Wenyi to help local women intellectuals in Kunming understand the changing international relations after the Yalta Conference.⁴¹²

During this period, the Joy Group played the same role in educating young women intellectuals about national and international politics as that played by the SSCA Women's Committee in Chongqing. In less than one year, the Joy Group organised more than a dozen public talks and seminars: the famous Chinese chemist and educator Zeng Zhaolun talked about the Second World War; the international relations expert Liu Simu gave a seminar on current international affairs; legal scholar Pan Dakui gave a lecture on Constitutionalism; poet Wen Yiduo talked about "the Chinese poet Qu Yuan and poetry" and Xin Zhichao lectured on "Soviet Democracy". "The women's question" was also explained and discussed from different perspectives: writer and educator Tu Chunan talked about "women and art", Li Gongpu offered his view on the issue of women's independence and self-confidence; Sun Qimeng discussed women's career issues; Deng Yuzhi engaged his audience with a discussion on "American women and social work"; and Shang Yue, a historian specialising in oracle, also gave a talk on "reinterpret women's issue in oracle".⁴¹³

The active academic circles in Kunming and the political tolerance by the Long Yun government made it easy for the Joy Group to invite famous scholars and researchers from *Xi'nan Lianda* to give talks. Since most of the speakers were friends of Li Wenyi at the South-western Academic Research Community and the Joy Group still benefited from the free venue offered by the YWCA, the cost of organising these seminars was low. More important, no document from Kunming suggests that any of these public events had been investigated or interrupted by police as so happened in Chongqing. For the Joy Group, organising academic talks and seminars as such was both convenient and safe, but to schedule any public activity beyond the academic circles without strong institutional and financial support would be much more difficult. Although compared with the previous Women's Career Community, the Joy Group had achieved a much bigger membership of 117 women by 1944, it did not become any less dependent on the YWCA as its members had

⁴¹² Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 8.

⁴¹³ Ibid, 6.

expected. During Japan's Ichi-Go Campaign, Li Wenyi and her friends had to rely on the YWCA again in order to mobilise local women for resistance.

As an unoccupied city on the geo-political periphery of wartime China, Kunming had remained unaffected by warfare until Japan initiated the Ichi-Go Campaign in April 1944 to fight cross the continent and to open a land route to French Indonesia.⁴¹⁴ With the city of Kunming threatened by the Japanese advance in southeast China, local women's organisations were finally mobilised to prepare for a war that might get close to their front door. Women members of the Joy Group could no longer sit tight discussing international and domestic affairs in seminars only. They joined hands with the YWCA to organise a nurse-training class at the YWCA dormitory on New Guanghua Road. Doctors and nurses were invited from local hospitals to train women activists to make sure that they gain basic medical knowledge and first-aid skills. At the same venue, the Joy Group also organised a Sunday forum to bring women activists together to continue discussing political affairs and women's issues. With more than a hundred women signed up, this nurse-training class showed a potential to mobilise more local women to participate in national resistance. However, soon after the crisis of the Ichi-Go Campaign had passed, the class was cancelled by the YWCA. Without any other sponsor or suitable venue to support their activities, Li Wenyi and her friends had to compromise again and stopped their Sunday forum.⁴¹⁵

Members of the Joy Group were eager to gain independence from the control of the YWCA also because they had suffered unfair treatment. They were frequently requested to teach classes organised by the YWCA without pay, while they were usually excluded from the decision-making process of the YWCA. Many group members had various problems in their private lives such as unemployment, sickness, pregnancy and crisis in marriage. For this reason a "mutual help fund" was established within the group to support friends with urgent

⁴¹⁴ Eastman, *The Nationalist era in China, 1927-1949*, 148.

⁴¹⁵ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 7.

financial needs, but it only lasted for six months and solved few problems.⁴¹⁶ Worse still, since legal registration with the local government was necessary for any independent organisation to participate in public assemblies, with its new name suggesting no affiliation with the legally registered YWCA, the Joy Group did not have rightful place to take part in public assemblies and movements:

Every time we participated in democratic movements, we had to use the name of the YWCA instead of our own name. We could not use our own name to organise any public assemblies. We had to hide behind the flags of other organisations or to stand inside of other groups, because we had no flag to represent our own group or a place assigned to us during public assembly. Sometimes we were even asked by the picket to leave public assemblies for causing ‘disorder’. We all felt so embarrassed about not having the status of an independent women’s organisation.⁴¹⁷

In this case, to obtain institutional and financial support elsewhere became the key to achieving the Group’s independence from the YWCA. As the only female DL member in Kunming, Li Wenyi had already led a women’s committee affiliated with the Yunnan branch of the Democratic League. Why did she not simply merge the Joy Group with the women’s committee under the DL Yunnan branch? First of all, to affiliate the Joy Group with a local women’s organisation such as the YWCA would help Li Wenyi develop networks among prominent women intellectuals in Kunming such as Zhong Shaoqin and Zhang Jinghua. By contrast, the newly founded women’s committee of the DL Yunnan branch, despite its “formal” sounding name, actually did not possess better access to the local social, political and financial resources.⁴¹⁸ Moreover, judging from the memberships of the Joy Group and the women’s committee of the DL Yunnan branch, the two groups were embedded in the same left-wing intellectual networks Li Wenyi maintained across local schools and universities, therefore a merger would not necessarily bring in new resources for network

⁴¹⁶ Liang Weijuan and Zeng Erfeng, “Sishi niandai Yunnan funüyundong pianduan” [The Fragments of Memory about Women’s Movements in 1940s Yunnan], source from *Yunnan funüyundongshi ziliao* 2, 34-35.

⁴¹⁷ Li, “Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi”, 10.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

development.⁴¹⁹ Last but not least, to establish a formal connection between the Joy Group and the DL would have limited Li Wenyi's political engagement with other political parties in Kunming.

For Li Wenyi, the question was how to better use the flexible structure and informal political network of the Joy Group to increase the levels and dimensions of left-wing women intellectuals' political engagement in Kunming. David Strand has argued that the "weak" or informal ties like common residence in a provincial lodge, a school dormitory, or a political club can also increase the levels of public political participation.⁴²⁰ In order to root her political network within local women's communities, Li Wenyi needed to rely on and develop these seemingly "weak" or informal political ties among local women intellectuals and students. However, this does not mean that Li's political engagement remained local in Kunming. As the next section shows, an effective connection between local women's groups and national political institutions and organisations in Chongqing became the key to achieving a breakthrough in network development.

Political engagement in two directions

Seeing that the Joy Group needed stronger institutional, political and financial support than what the YWCA had provided, Li Wenyi had to explore new resources in order to develop her political network in Kunming. Besides building her social relations and political contacts among local women's communities in a horizontal direction, political engagement in a vertical direction with the CCP South Bureau in Chongqing proved to be essential for the maintenance of left-wing women's networks in Kunming. Although information exchange between underground communist networks in Kunming and the CCP South Bureau in

⁴¹⁹ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 1-2; Li Wenyi, "Zai Yunnan Minmeng nei de gongzuo huiyi" [Memory about Working within the Yunnan Branch of the Democratic League], source from *Yunnan xiandaishi yanjiu ziliao* 7 [the Research Materials on the Modern History of Yunnan Province, Vol. 7] (Yunnan Renmin Press, 1981).

⁴²⁰ Strand, *An Unfinished Republic*, 157.

Chongqing had been achieved in the late 1930s, official institutional connection between Li Wenyi's group and women's organisations in Chongqing was not established until 1945.⁴²¹

The official connection between Chongqing and Kunming for the development of left-wing women's networks started with a letter from Cao Mengjun to Li Wenyi. After the China Women's Association (CWA) had been established in Chongqing in 1945, Cao Mengjun asked the DL leader Sa Kongliao, who was planning to go to Hong Kong by way of Kunming, to take her letter to Li Wenyi together with the stipulation of the CWA. Following Sa Kongliao, Zheng Ying, the wife of the KMT Navy financial director and a founding member of the CWA, also arrived in Kunming to introduce the newly founded CWA to local women intellectuals. Li Wenyi and her friends at the Joy Group were so excited about the news that they immediately started the preparation for launching a Yunnan branch of the CWA. The other women's organisation led by Li Wenyi, the women's committee of the DL Yunnan branch, also joined in the preparatory work.⁴²² On 2 December, one day after the "December 1 incident"⁴²³ in Kunming, the Yunnan Women's Association (the Yunnan branch of the China Women's Association) was officially established.

Despite its strong link with left-wing women's networks in Chongqing, the Yunnan Women's Association was not founded as an underground organisation. Although the inaugural meeting was secretly arranged in a house behind the dormitory of the YWCA, the Yunnan Women's Association and its organ *Fun ü Xunkan* (妇女旬刊)⁴²⁴ were both legally registered in Kunming using the address "No. 55 Fuzhao street, Kunming".⁴²⁵ In the

⁴²¹ Zheng, "Huiyi Kunming dangneiwai funügongzuo qingkuang", 16.

⁴²² Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 10.

⁴²³ On 1 December 1945, to suppress students' "anti-civil war" movement in Kunming, armed KMT forces, backed by an unknown number of plainclothes provocateurs, entered *Xi'nan Lianda* and other campuses around the city, inciting riots, beating and arresting students. When the violence ended, four civilians were killed. Three of them were students—Li Lulian and Pan Yan (female) from *Xi'nan Lianda*, Zhang Huachang from Kunhua School and the fourth victim was a teacher named Yu Zai from Nanjing Middle School.

⁴²⁴ *Fun ü Xunkan* is a women's periodical published every 10 days. Because of the lack of English term for "Xunkan", here I use the original Chinese title of the journal.

⁴²⁵ The survey of women's organisations in Kunming, 1946, YPA, 104-01-03.

survey conducted by the KMT on women's organisations in Yunnan, the Yunnan Women's Association was listed next to the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community and the YWCA. According to this survey, the Yunnan Women's Association had already achieved 600 to 700 registered members by 1946, most of whom were "female teachers and students leaning to the left".⁴²⁶ The rapid rise in membership shows that the establishment of Yunnan Women's Association not only helped the Joy Group obtain the legal status as a registered organisation, but also supported Li's network development among local left-wing women intellectuals and female students.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, journal publishing had become an important way of networking used by women intellectuals to enhance local ties and to achieve cross-regional connections. In Chongqing, over two years before the CWA was officially established, the journal *Modern Women* had been launched by Cao Mengjun to help reinforce and integrate left-wing women's networks. In the case of Kunming, the launch of *Fun ü Xunkan* by Yang Moxia also played an important role in enhancing women intellectuals' political networks in and out of Kunming.

Yang Moxia was born in Mojiang, a small town in south Yunnan. She studied in Nanjing in the 1930s and participated in the National Salvation Movement before returning to Kunming after the outbreak of the War. Instead of Li Wenyi, Yang Moxia was elected as the chair of the Yunnan Women's Association not only because, as a local women's leader, Yang held broad social and political relations in Kunming, but also because Yang's position as the chief editor of *Fun ü Xunkan* would further help with the expansion of the CWA network in Yunnan.⁴²⁷ Links between the Yunnan Women's Association and the CWA in Chongqing were soon strengthened through the publication of *Fun ü Xunkan* and *Modern Women*. Yang Moxia posted the first six issues of *Fun ü Xunkan* published in November and December 1945

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Another source shows that Li Wenyi was elected as chair of the Yunnan Women's Association, and Yang Moxia succeeded Li Wenyi in March 1946 after Li had left Kunming. "The History of Mass Organisations" in *Yunnan shengzhi* 54, 321; but here I stick to the information from Li Wenyi's personal memoir, which stressed that Yang was elected as chair of the Yunnan Women's Association.

to Cao Mengjun. In return, Cao posted back the latest issue of *Modern Women* (Volume 6, Issue 6) together with a letter asking for more information about *Fun ü Xunkan*. The two of them also agreed on exchanging the advertisements of the two journals in order to attract more sponsors and advertisers.⁴²⁸

While strengthening the institutional and political connection with Chongqing, Li Wenyi did not stop her engagement with local women's organisations and groups. However, after the Civil War had started, cooperation between Li Wenyi's group and local KMT organisations became more difficult. This change was not only caused by the growing political division between the left side and the right side among women's networks, as so happened in Chongqing in the late 1940s, but also by the intensified competition between different women's organisations for political and financial recourses at the local level.

In March 1946, to celebrate the first Women's Day after the War, Li Wenyi contacted the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community for cooperation. After a long delay in replying, the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community agreed on organising a joint event but with one condition: the theme of the event had to be "urging the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Manchuria in the name of all Chinese women". As pointed out by Suzanne Pepper and Peter Zarrow, both the KMT and the CCP had used the issue of nationalism to strengthen their political legitimacy during the Civil War: while the KMT blamed the CCP for the delayed withdrawal of the Soviet troops in Manchuria, the CCP also criticised the KMT for the misconduct of the U.S. troops in China.⁴²⁹ For left-wing women leaders at the Yunnan Women's Association, by protesting against the Soviet troops in Manchuria, these local KMT women leaders were simply expecting to direct public attention away from the rising demand

⁴²⁸ "Xiandai funü she jigei benkan de xin" [The Letter Sent from *Modern Women* to our Journal], *Fun ü Xunkan* Vol. 1 Issue 9 (1946), source from *Yunnan fun ü yundongshi ziliao 3B* [The Historical Materials of Women's Movements in Yunnan Province Vol. 3B] (Yuannan fun ü yundong lianhehui press, 1983), 284-285.

⁴²⁹ Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle 1945-1949*, 212-216; Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (UK, USA and Canada: Routledge, 2006), 339-340.

for the withdrawal of American troops after the War, and therefore to please the U.S., the ally of the KMT in the Civil War.⁴³⁰

Given this irreconcilable political difference, the Yunnan Women's Association had to search elsewhere for the local support that they needed to organise a celebration event. The Association eventually attracted 17 student self-governance associations (学生自治会) from universities and middle schools in Kunming. Each student self-governance association contributed 10,000 yuan to the celebration event. The Yunnan Women's Association and the women's committee of the DL Yunnan branch managed to contribute 60,000 yuan altogether plus some personal donations raised from their members.⁴³¹ With the financial and network support secured, the only problem left for Yunnan Women's Association to solve was the event venue. To hire an event venue, Li Wenyi and Yang Moxia relied on their personal relations with Qin Shuzhen, the principal of Kunhua Girls' Middle School.

Although Qin Shuzhen was also a member of the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community, she was not a partisan of the KMT. In the early 1920s, Qin joined the "New Yunnan Society"—a revolutionary society founded by the Yunnan sojourners in Beijing. Joined the same society at the time were also the famous democratic intellectual Zhang Tianfang and Marxist philosopher Li Shengxuan (Ai Siqu).⁴³² As Nagatomi Hirayama argues, the May Fourth student societies rose through an interwoven network of travelling students, and though in different regions, these dispersed student groups were affiliated with each other through shared ideals or native places.⁴³³ When studying at Beijing Girls' Normal University, Qin Shuzhen built her political contacts with democratic intellectuals from Yunnan, and she became a member of the communist Youth Group under their influence.⁴³⁴ Considering Qin

⁴³⁰ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 12.

⁴³¹ Ibid, 13.

⁴³² The memoir of Feng Suta on the "New Yunnan Society" in Beiping 1923-1924, *Yunnan wenshi ziliao xuanji* 31, 5.

⁴³³ Nagatomi Hirayama, "Partifying Sichuan: The Chinese Youth Party in Sichuan, 1926-1937", *Frontiers of History in China* 8:2 (2013): 223-258.

⁴³⁴ The memoir of Feng Suta on the "New Yunnan Society" in Beiping 1923-1924.

as a left-wing women activist, Li Wenyi and Yang Moxia were confident that she would agree to offer them the meeting hall of Kunhua Girls' Middle School as the event venue.

What Li Wenyi and Yang Moxia had not expected was the interference of KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community. After learning about the plan of the Yunnan Women's Association, Zhang Bangzhen, the chair of the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community, called Qin Shuzhen and questioned her decision to offer the meeting hall to Li Wenyi. Qin Shuzhen had to negotiate between Li Wenyi and Zhang Bangzhen in order to make both sides satisfied. Although the meeting hall was eventually offered to the Yunnan Women's Association, the offer was not unconditional: first of all, the starting time was changed from 2pm to 9am, and in addition, the meeting had to be called in the name of Kunhua student self-governance association instead of the Yunnan Women's Association. Yet more "surprises" were waiting for Li Wenyi and her colleagues on the day of celebration:

At 9am when the meeting began, the Yunnan Education Minister suddenly appeared in the audience together with two representatives from the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community. Journalists of different newspapers also arrived without our invitation. After several women leaders had given their speeches, nine male guests stepped onto the stage one by one to send their congratulations to women. In the end, there was no time left for our representatives from students, workers and career women to talk as scheduled.⁴³⁵

Because of the sudden change of time, many members of the Yunnan Women's Association did not receive the notice and therefore missed the celebration event. Calling the meeting in the name of Kunhua student self-governance association also upset the other student self-governance associations which had contributed to the event. Furthermore, the original plan made by the Yunnan Women's Association was completely altered on the day with their speakers replaced by those uninvited male guests. And the credit for organising the event was also taken by the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community.⁴³⁶

It is understandable that Zhang Bangzhen did not trust Li Wenyi because of their different political stances, but her apparent sabotage of the event organised by the Yunnan Women's

⁴³⁵ Li, "Guanyu kangzhan shiqi Yunnan funüyundong de huiyi", 13.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

Association in fact signifies the inner crisis of local KMT women's organisations during the War. Established in 1932, the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community was located in the compound of the KMT Yunnan Party Headquarters. As the largest women's organisation in Kunming with 39 member groups and over 1,000 individual members by 1946, it used to have strong political influence over local girls' schools, colleges and universities through the KMT *Sanqingtuan*.⁴³⁷ However, the growing left-wing women's networks on campus, as manifested by the interconnections between the Yunnan Women's Association and local student self-governance associations, forced Zhang Bangzhen to fight for her "territory" at Kunhua Girls' Middle School.

Under pressure to increase the percentage of KMT members in local women's organisations, Zhang Bangzhen, among other local KMT women leaders, had no choice but to make sure that female students and intellectuals would not gravitate towards other political parties. Since 1944, letters from the KMT Central Organisation Department arrived in Kunming one after another, pressing on local KMT women's organisations to recruit members from school students and career women. Governor Long Yun passed these orders down to the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee. The task was to make sure that female members would make up 25% of the total party members recruited by the KMT each year. The KMT Yunnan Executive Committee also required local KMT women's organisations to send a monthly report on their recruitment progress.⁴³⁸ However, sadly for KMT women leaders, the financial support from the KMT central authority was not as strong as its political demand. In the memos of the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Community, Zhang Bangzhen detailed the financial problems facing her organisation during the War:

Before 1942, the subsidy we received from the Central Organisation Department was 300 yuan per month, and then due to the severe hyperinflation, the Central Organisation Department agreed to increase the subsidy to 2,000 yuan per month in 1943. However, we

⁴³⁷ The survey of women's organisation in Yunnan Province, 1946, YPA, 104-01-03.

⁴³⁸ Orders from the KMT Yunnan Executive Committee to the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee (on behalf of the KMT Central Organisation Department), 15 February, 1944 and 4 November, 1945, YPA, 104-01-01.

did not receive any subsidy from January to June in 1943, so we had to use our own personal savings to maintain the organisation. From July onwards, the subsidy was decreased to 1,000 yuan. After 2,000 yuan in total was paid for July and August, we have not received any more money since September. It has become extremely difficult to continue working without financial support. I presented this case to the senior institutions before but did not receive any reply.⁴³⁹

It was 13 April 1944 when this memo was filed, which means that the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee had been running without financial support for more than half a year. The monthly budget of the organisation in 1943 was 8,460 yuan in total, within which only 1,560 yuan was used for paying staff (two administrative officers and two handymen), while all of the committee members were working without salary.⁴⁴⁰ For Zhang Bangzhen, to chair an organisation without pay was frustrating, while to achieve an ambitious recruitment task with the subsidies terribly delayed or unpaid to the organisation was nearly impossible. In December 1945, Zhang Bangzhen handed in her resignation from her position as the chair of the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee due to the difficulty of proceeding without financial support. It was stated in the Committee's annual work summary that:

The Yunnan Provincial Party Headquarters requests the recruitment of women party members from local universities and schools in order to develop women's organisations in counties and cities. However due to the limited budget, organisational slack and inefficient reconstruction, the chair of the Committee [Yunnan Women's Movement Committee] has handed in her resignation.⁴⁴¹

According to the resolution from the Yunnan Executive Committee on 29 December, following Zhang Bangzhen's resignation, the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee

⁴³⁹ The memorandum of the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, 13 April, 1944, YPA, 104-01-09.

⁴⁴⁰ The monthly budget in 1943, Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, 1943, YPA, 104-01-01.

⁴⁴¹ Annual work summary, Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, 1945, YPA, 104-01-09.

was required to conduct a reorganisation.⁴⁴² This explains why KMT women's organisations in Kunming had been desperately defending the KMT's leadership within local women's communities, in particular local schools and universities where the underground CCP and the Democratic League were also cultivating their networks. Given the same difficulty of approaching central political authorities for continuous political and financial support, women's organisations in Kunming, despite their different political affiliations, had to compete with each other for the local resources available on campus.

Network development and competition on campus

Similar to Beijing in the May Fourth era, Kunming in the 1940s was a university city. Not only *Xi'nan Lianda*, formed by China's most prestigious universities, but also local universities and schools such as Yunnan University, Hunhua Girls' Normal School, Kunhua Women's Vocational College, and Kunhua Girls' Middle School were involved in various political and social movements during the course of the War. Both the KMT and the CCP regarded campus as an important area to control, as Hu Kuo-Tai has argued, both sides considered the work of winning over the youth and intellectuals as vital to the party's future.⁴⁴³ Women intellectuals' political networks in Kunming, despite their different political affiliations, were imbedded in these intellectual communities and student bodies.

During the War, Kunhua Girls' Middle School became the base of different political parties to develop their local political networks among young educated women from upper class. Zeng Erfeng was one of the young women who had studied at Kunhua in the 1930s and then joined Li Wenyi's Joy Group and the Yunnan Women's Association in the 1940s. At school, Zeng and her schoolmates Yang Xianru, Liang Weijuan, Fan Shujin, Lu Shiying and Lu Houyin had already involved in a secret reading group organised by the underground CCP

⁴⁴² The order from KMT Yunnan Executive Committee, 29 December, 1945, YPA, 104-01-01.

⁴⁴³ Hu Kuo-tai, "The Struggle between the Kuomintang and the Chinese communist Party on Campus during the War of Resistance, 1937-1945", *the China Quarterly* 118 (1989): 300.

at Kunhua. The KMT *Sanqingtuan* was the other influential political organisation on campus which recruited directly from school teachers and students to prepare them for their future political commitment and contribution to the KMT.⁴⁴⁴



Fig. 3. The singing group of Kunhua Girls' middle school performing *New Women*, the opera written by Nie Er. (10 August, 1938)

Source: Yunnan fun ü yundongshi ziliao [The Historical Materials of Women's Movements in Yunnan Province]

Concentrating on the political impact of war and women's movement in wartime Chongqing, Li Danke has argued that "participation in political cultural activities for war mobilisation enabled the young women to break free of the confinement of the elitist circle and make contacts with peasants and ordinary people."⁴⁴⁵ Kunming, like wartime Chongqing, enabled the cultural and political space for Zeng Erfeng and her schoolmates to organise singing and reading groups and to engage with local people. Wearing knee-length plain or patterned cotton *qipao* dresses, these young women had a typical school-girl look, which became a convenient cover for their political gatherings and activities. They usually went to

⁴⁴⁴ Liang and Zeng, "Sishi niandai Yunnan funü yundong pianduan", 31.

⁴⁴⁵ Li, *Echoes of Chongqing*, 130.

the Yangzonghai Lake or the Dianchi Lake at weekends and held their reading and discussion sessions on boats. Before going home, they would also visit local peasants' houses in the West Hills.⁴⁴⁶ Their reading materials were provided by the underground CCP in Kunming: books such as *Red Star over China* by the American journalist Edger Snow, *Track of Duckweed: My Travel Notes* (*Ping Zong Ji Yu* 萍踪寄语) by Zou Taofen, novels by Ba Jin as well as translated Soviet novels were the favourite readings of these young women activists.

We went back together after our discussions, singing along the way home. The reading group helped increase our knowledge. We gradually understood that the KMT was the most corrupt party and the most anti-revolutionary ruler, and we learnt that in China we also had liberated areas and a communist party led by Chairman Mao. We really hoped to develop our country and make it just like the Soviet Union.⁴⁴⁷

Even though Zeng Erfeng and her friends did not have any in-depth knowledge about either the Communist Party or the Soviet Union, their network on campus was not dispensable for the underground CCP. Like in Guangdong where children were trained by local underground CCP to work in espionage, in Kunming school girls were also skilled at passing important information about the local KMT to the underground CCP.⁴⁴⁸ Lu Houyin and Lu Shiying were both students at Kunhua Girls' middle school and active members of the secret reading group. Their father Lu Guofan was the Garrison Commander of Kunming, who happened to be in charge of checking the intercepted and censored communist publications in the region. Having noticed that their father seldom used his study after dinner, the Lu sisters turned it into the meeting venue for their reading group, where they had free access to all kinds of communist publications that had been confiscated by the KMT. Using an ink brush and rice water, these school girls wrote down the information inside a book and passed it on

⁴⁴⁶ The Yangzong Sea and Dianchi are both lakes close to Kunming.

⁴⁴⁷ Liang and Zeng, "Sishi niandai Yunnan funüyundong pianduan", 58.

⁴⁴⁸ Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese communist Party in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 61.

to the higher-level communist contact, who could read it by applying Iodine tincture over the pages.⁴⁴⁹

At school, investigating and isolating teachers and students who were involved in the KMT *Sanqingtuan* was routine for the secret reading group. Zeng Erfeng and her friends paid special attention to the background of each new teacher who came to Kunhua to teach. However, the criterion they used for background-checking was not a sophisticated one: “If the newcomer teaches well in class and has progressive ideas (进步思想), he must be good, whilst if he looks like a rascal and worships the *Sanqingtuan*, he must be bad.”⁴⁵⁰ The way of fighting against “the bad” was also straightforward: “We encourage all students to disobey him.”⁴⁵¹ Many targeted teachers were eventually forced by students to leave or resign, including the training officers sent by the KMT to conduct military training in local schools and a literature teacher who was a member of the KMT *Sanqingtuan*. With regard to the student members of *Sanqingtuan* at school, Zeng Erfeng and her friends simply refused to speak with them or take part in any of their activities.⁴⁵²

Like in the Maoist era when the evaluation of a person was conducted according to his class and political background, in the wartime period, Kunming school girls had judged a teacher’s capability and character based on his relations with the KMT. With a teleological view, one can argue that this is because local women intellectuals had started accepting the CCP as the more progressive political leader at this time. But reading the local narratives carefully, I argue that women intellectuals’ political identification during the War was more complex than its post-war result has suggested. Their political choices should not be interpreted without considering the local political conditions. In Chongqing where the left-wing networks were developing at the national level and political boundaries were blurred within national women’s organisations, women intellectuals’ gradual identification with the CCP was the result of their long-term cross-party political engagement and

⁴⁴⁹ Zheng, “Huiyi Kunming dangneiwai funügongzuo qingkuang”, 18-19.

⁴⁵⁰ Liang and Zeng, “Sishi niandai Yunnan funüyundong pianduan”, 58.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid, 58-59.

communication, whilst in Kunming where political resources were comparatively scarce and the KMT was the only dominant local political power, these female students' identification with the left side was usually because of their dissatisfaction with the KMT rather than their political agreement with the CCP.

With or without the CCP's united-front framework and its wartime propaganda, the KMT was unpopular with local students in Kunming during the War. As Zeng Erfeng remembered, after the New Fourth Army Incident, the activity of the KMT *Sanqingtuan* became reckless in school: "They coerced students into participation, if you refused, they would register you anyway without telling you. Many women did not realise that they had 'joined' the KMT during the War until after 1949 when their documents were checked by the CCP to judge their political status."⁴⁵³ *Sanqingtuan*'s political control over local student bodies was not the only reason that the KMT was unpopular among students. The KMT Yunnan Education Bureau also attempted to ensure that all school boards were in the hands of KMT leaders. In 1943, students in Kunhua Girls' Middle School were shocked to learn that their principal Qin Shuzhen was going to be replaced by Zhang Bangzhen, the erstwhile chair of the KMT Women's Movement Committee and the KMT Yunnan Provincial Women's Community. Considering that Qin Shuzhen had "a liberal mind and nice personality" and therefore was less likely to suppress students' political activities, Kunhua students decided to protest against this replacement. The "movement to protect school" was supported by most teaching staff and students, as well as by Qin Shuzhen herself. Student representatives petitioned in front of the Provincial Government and the Yunnan Education Bureau, repeatedly asking for an explanation from the local government. The movement continued for a month until the Yunnan Education Bureau agreed to keep Qin Shuzhen as the school principal.⁴⁵⁴

The unpopularity of the KMT among local students was also clearly shown in the party recruitment records at local universities and schools. In 1942, the KMT Yunnan Women's Movement Committee conducted a survey on the enrolled female students at universities, colleges and middle schools in Kunming, in order to collect information about the number of

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 60.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 61-62.

female students in each institution, their age, major and political status.⁴⁵⁵ According to the survey results returned by Xiong Qinglai, the principal of Yunnan University, of the approximately 120 female students enrolled in Yunnan University that year, only two had joined local KMT women's organisations as party members and the rest had no recorded political identity.⁴⁵⁶ Disappointed by the slow development of local KMT women's organisations, in April 1943, the KMT Central Organisation Department obliged the Yunnan Women's Movement Committee to select three "correspondents" (通讯员) responsible for enhancing communication between the central KMT authorities and local women's bodies and organisations. Their responsibilities were detailed as follows:

The correspondents will regularly contact local KMT women's movement committees, KMT provincial/municipal women's communities, and local women's bodies and groups in universities, colleges, factories as well as in governmental institutions, and submit a report at least once a month. If the correspondents are requested to carry out investigations, they should report the results of the investigations. All reports must be directly mailed back to the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee and the reported information should be highly confidential.⁴⁵⁷

However, once again, the KMT's demand for good performance of local women's organisations did not come with stronger financial support. The KMT Organisation Department only promised to reimburse correspondents for their telegraph and stationery costs. While the only reward guaranteed to them was a reference letter to help them find a better job.⁴⁵⁸ It is unclear how many candidates were attracted to the position; it is certain that, for local women activists who did not have any other stable income during the War, to carry on such a job was very difficult.

⁴⁵⁵ Notice about the survey on currently enrolled female students in local universities, colleges and middle schools, Yunnan Women's Movement Committee, 16 April, 1942, YPA, 1016-001-00995-042.

⁴⁵⁶ Official letter from the principal of Yunnan University Xiong Qinglai with the completed survey attached, 2 May, 1942, YPA, 104-01-10.

⁴⁵⁷ Notification from the KMT Central Organisation Department, 20 April, 1943, YPA, 104-01-01.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

Given the increasing political pressure coming from the KMT authorities but the decreasing financial support, local KMT women's organisations had to rely on the resources available on campus to tighten their ties with local student bodies. One noticeable change was that the women's constitutional forums, previously organised among KMT women officials and staff members in Kunming, became open to female students in 1944; the regular meeting venue for women's activities was also changed from the KMT Provincial Party Headquarters to the meeting hall of Kunhua Girls' Middle School.⁴⁵⁹

In this light, unlike in Chongqing where those prominent women intellectuals enhanced their political networks through participating in national institutions such as the WAC and the PPC, in Kunming the main space for women intellectuals' political networking was on campus. Due to the lack of political and financial support from central authorities and party headquarters, women's organisations in Kunming, despite their different political affiliations, competed with each other to benefit from the social, political and financial resources available in local universities and schools. Therefore, when Li Wenyi arrived in Kunming in 1943 and began to build a left-wing women's network, she soon realised that in order to fight against the KMT's central control of local women's organisations, her network had to penetrate intellectual communities and student bodies in Kunming.

Conclusion

Women intellectuals' political networking in Kunming shows different patterns compared with that in Chongqing: First, lacking a privileged women's organisation with broad social and political connections across various political parties and institutions such as the WAC, local women leaders in Kunming such as Zhang Bangzhen and Li Wenyi were simply not as powerful as Song Meiling and Deng Yingchao in terms of maintaining cross-party women's

⁴⁵⁹ Invitation letter from the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community for the third women's constitutional forum in Kunming, 11 April, 1944, YPA, 1011-015-00009-027; Invitation letter from the Yunnan Provincial Women's Community for the fourth women's constitutional forum in Kunming, 22 April, 1944, YPA, 1016-001-00213-010.

communication either in public or in private. Second, given the limited political and financial support from central authorities and party headquarters in Chongqing, both cooperation and competition were necessary at the local level for the purpose of network development. Third, due to the repugnant political control conducted by the KMT *Sanqingtuan* on campus, many young female activists gravitated to the left side due to their dissatisfaction with the KMT and their curiosity of participating in secret communist groups. And most important, as demonstrated in Li Wenyi's case, the academic and student communities in Kunming provided women intellectuals with crucial social and political resources for their network development.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the end of the War of Resistance did not result in the termination of women intellectuals' political engagement and networking in Kunming. After the War of Resistance, both the KMT and the CCP continued strengthening their connections with local women's organisations and communities so as to achieve their political dominance. The rapid development of the Yunnan Women's Association and the unbridled activities of the KMT *Sanqingtuan* on campus indicate that, before the two parties launched their major military campaigns during the Civil War, the urban sites of China had already been turned into "battlefields" where they fought for local social, financial and political resources.

Although it might go too far to argue that the CCP had achieved its predominance in women's organisations in Kunming by 1946, it is certain that during her three-year stay in Kunming, Li Wenyi not only successfully established a left-wing women's organisation, but also developed strong friendships with local women intellectuals. When she left for Chongqing in March 1946, the friends she had made in Kunming such as Yang Moxia, Zeng Erfeng and Liang Weijuan, who by then were already women leaders at the Yunnan Women's Association, all came to see her off. Li Wenyi took a transport plane from Kunming to Chongqing, and after staying at the headquarters of the Democratic League on Guofu Road for about a month, she moved again from Chongqing to Nanjing.⁴⁶⁰ By this time,

⁴⁶⁰ Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 293-296.

the majority of émigré intellectuals in Chongqing had also returned to the major cities in east China along with the returning political institutions and organisations after the War.

The return of the Nationalist government to Nanjing and the start of the Civil War once again changed the geo-political landscape of China and shifted the spaces for women intellectuals' political networking. James Wilkinson has pointed out the uneasy choices for post-war French intellectuals: "Choice during the Resistance was easy: one was for or against the Germans; it was black or white. Today—and since 1945—the situation has grown more complex."⁴⁶¹ In 1946, when Li Wenyi and her colleagues at the CWA returned to Nanjing, Shanghai and Beijing—cities that had been occupied by Japan for eight years—they were faced with a more complicated political situation during the final life-and-death struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists. The next chapter will demonstrate the transformations of women intellectuals' political networks through the Civil War and the "1949 liberation".

⁴⁶¹ Wilkinson, *The Intellectual Resistance in Europe*, 106.

Chapter 6

At the beginning of my thesis, I discussed Xia Bengying's political experience during the wartime era. Her story not only inspired me to examine women intellectuals' engagement with the competing political parties and groups during the War, but also drew my attention to their ambivalent identification with the CCP, the rising political power which decided their life after 1949. Therefore, China's "bitter victory"⁴⁶² in the War of Resistance and the return of Nationalist government to Nanjing was not the end of the story about women intellectuals' political networking and identification. Chinese women intellectuals who returned to the east in 1946 faced no less difficulty maintaining their political networks during the Civil War and after the communist takeover. It is worth extending the story of these women intellectuals to the less covered but equally important post-war period, so as to answer the following questions: Could women intellectuals' cross-party communication proceed during the Civil War after the peace negotiation between the KMT and the CCP had failed? How did women intellectuals further identify with the fast rising communist power? Furthermore, how long could the CCP support the diverse political frameworks, workshops and networks maintained by women intellectuals before taking a central control of women's organisations after 1949?

Historians such as Suzanne Pepper and Peter Zarrow have studied the Civil War from the perspective of the CCP's hegemony, stressing the Party's effective use of land reform in the rural areas to guarantee military and economic support from the masses.⁴⁶³ The Civil War, as argued by Peter Zarrow, was thus a class war and a rural-urban war.⁴⁶⁴ However, this interpretation could lead to a partial understanding of the CCP's wartime strategy reflected in

⁴⁶² James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine eds., *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992).

⁴⁶³ Please see Pepper, *Civil War in China*; Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*.

⁴⁶⁴ Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 356.

Mao's "New Democracy" and the united-front framework. This strategy was not only applied in the countryside to strengthen the control of the base areas and to ease the land reform. It was also applied in the KMT-held urban sites to penetrate the networks of another social class that Mao wanted to control—the intelligentsia. The last chapter of my thesis therefore focuses on women intellectuals' political networks during the Civil War and in the first years of communist China. Through examining the transformation of women intellectuals' political networks against the backdrop of the Civil War and the "1949 liberation", this chapter aims to show that women intellectuals' political engagement and identification with the "left wing" is not simply a result of the CCP's hegemony, but a reflection and a crucial component of the changing political landscape in the urban areas in the late 1940s, which facilitated the CCP's political victory over its different contenders, especially the KMT.

Reading the history of Chinese women intellectuals without paying attention to their complex political networks and their continuous political identification, one would mark the year 1945 as the finishing point of women intellectuals' cross-party organisation for resistance, and the communist takeover in 1949 as the watershed year when the diverse non-governmental organisations, social groups and societies, including women intellectuals' political networks, were amalgamated under the CCP's political control.⁴⁶⁵ Taking Liu-Wang Liming's life experience as an example, Wang Zheng has argued that the establishment of the All-China Women's Federation in 1949 fulfilled the dreams of many early communist feminists to unify the women's movement and it signalled the successful conclusion of the CCP's institutionalisation of that movement.⁴⁶⁶ However this chapter shows that the cross-party political communication among women intellectuals did not stop at the end of the War; nor did their networks simply dissolve after 1949. Although the diverse political organisations and networks maintained by women intellectuals during the War were eventually integrated into the ACWF, the CCP's institutionalisation of the Chinese women's

⁴⁶⁵ For example, Xia Rong's research on the WAC and Li Danke's oral history on women in wartime Chongqing only cover the period of the War of Resistance and suggest the discontinuity in women's political participation before and after the War.

⁴⁶⁶ Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, 143.

movement was a long and uneasy process, which hardly reached a successful conclusion in 1949.

Returning to east China

After the War of Resistance had finished, the Nationalist government started to prepare its “return to Nanjing”. In 1946, governmental institutions and organisations, the wartime headquarters and offices of the CCP, the Democratic League and other political groups in Chongqing were moved back to Nanjing. Women intellectuals who had been working in the hinterland for the KMT Central Women’s Movement Committee, the WAC, the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association and the newly founded CWA also returned to east China along with their organisations. However, the end of the War of Resistance did not result in national unification or political reconciliation between the competing parties. Women intellectuals who had returned to east China were still frustrated by the poor cooperation between different women’s organisations while enduring prolonged confusion about their own political roles under the shadow of an imminent civil war. The deteriorating economic and political situation in the late 1940s made it even more difficult for many of them to maintain political networks and activities in public, when surviving the recession and severe infliction and avoiding the KMT’s political purge became the priorities.

While the WAC quickly shrank after the War of Resistance, the focus of KMT women’s organisations, the Central Women Movement Committee in particular, changed from national resistance to anti-CCP activities and to women’s participation in the post-war legislative process. The CWA, in spite of its scattered local branches, managed to develop its networks in the KMT-held cities through the anti-civil war movements burgeoning among students and intellectuals. For women intellectuals who had held complex networks across different political parties and women’s organisations, their “return to the east” under the shadow of the Civil War led to difficult choices and different possibilities in their political and personal lives.

With most of its local branches and service groups dismissed after the War, the WAC lost its national leadership role in organising and uniting women in the post-war period.⁴⁶⁷ On 24 March 1946, the WAC director-general Chen Jiyi and 33 chief leaders flew from Chongqing to Nanjing, attempting to restructure the organisation. They set up the new WAC headquarters firstly at No. 300 Zhongshan Road and then moved it to No. 2 Gulou Lane.⁴⁶⁸ However, the scale of the organisation and its membership quickly shrank after 1946, and most of these chief leaders left Nanjing for Shanghai, Guangzhou or Taiwan after 1948.⁴⁶⁹ As many KMT women leaders had hoped, the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee tightened its central control over women's organisations after the War. In May 1945, the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee was finally restructured under the jurisdiction of the KMT Central Executive Committee and granted the same power as the "Central Women's Department" during the National Revolution. This change meant that the WAC, a cross-party women's political framework during the War, was then replaced by a centralised KMT organisation to lead the women's movement and to recruit women members into the KMT. By July 1947, the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee had established 46 provincial/municipal branches and 851 county-level branches across the nation. The KMT Women's Community also launched 24 provincial/municipal branches and 370 county-level branches.⁴⁷⁰

Returning to east China after the War were also women leaders and intellectuals who were affiliated with left-wing organisations and groups. In 1946, most members of the CWA left Chongqing for Nanjing, Shanghai and Beiping, while a few local women leaders such as Zhao Shilan, the secretary-general of the CCP women's committee, stayed in Chongqing and organised the Chongqing Women's Association to continue their activities. Many women intellectuals from the Nanjing-Shanghai region, such as Tan Tiwu and Lu Huinian returned to

⁴⁶⁷ The list of dismissed WAC members and their severance pay, February 1, 1946, CMA, 0016-0001-00058, 81-92.

⁴⁶⁸ The official letter from the WAC to the Chongqing Municipal Government, 21 March, 1946, CMA, 0053-0032-00069, 281.

⁴⁶⁹ Song, "Zhanhou xinyun fuzhihui de zuzhi bianqian", 79.

⁴⁷⁰ Hong, *Zhongguo guomindang fun ü gongzuo zhi yanjiu*, 320-322.

Nanjing and established the Nanjing Women's Association, while Liu Qingyang and the CCP leader Zhang Xiaomei returned to Beiping and formed the Beiping Women's Association. The rest of the CWA members went back to Shanghai and combined their branch with local women's communities led by Xu Guangping (Lu Xun's widow). The standing committee of the Shanghai Women's Association included many famous names such as Xu Guangping, Shi Liang, Cao Mengjun, Hu Ziyang, Hu Naiqiu and Ni Feijun.⁴⁷¹

Despite the gradual power transfer from the KMT to the CCP in leading democratic and anti-civil war movements in the 1940s, the processes of women intellectuals' political identification with the competing political parties were still unsettled and fragmented after the War. Although the CCP South Bureau tried to integrate all left-wing women networks under the CWA, it is not evident that by 1946 the CCP had already dominated women intellectuals' political networks, especially those in the KMT-controlled major cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing and Beiping. Albeit protesting the KMT's political dictatorship and its civil-war policy, women members of the CWA were still involved in different political institutions and women's organizations after they had returned to east China. Those CWA members who returned to Shanghai in 1946, for example, were faced with scattered networks, unclear roles and blurred political boundaries in their continuous political engagement.

Scattered networks, unclear roles and blurred political boundaries

At the Women's Day celebration in 1946 Shanghai, different political camps and voices appeared among women intellectuals who had just returned and those who stayed in Shanghai during the occupation. It was supposed to be a day celebrated by all Shanghai women together for defeating the Japanese occupiers and achieving their "liberation". However, three entirely different celebrations were organised by different groups of women intellectuals in the city. The KMT Shanghai Municipal Party Branch invited about 2,000 social elites and public figures in town to an event at the famous Daguangming cinema,

⁴⁷¹ *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao* 5, 391.

which was followed by a ball free of charge at the luxurious Lidu club. The Shanghai YWCA organised another celebration at Huangjin Great Cinema, a gathering followed by a film-screening, which attracted about 700 female college students. A third celebration, and perhaps the most “poorly organised” one, was organised by Xu Guangping and left-wing intellectuals at Zhaofeng Park (also known as Jessfield Park) despite the heavy rain and chilly wind. About 20,000 people went to the park, including women workers, students, career women as well as some local residents and rubbernecks.⁴⁷²

According to the report in *Fun ü Xunkan*, the themes and atmosphere of the three celebrations were so different that they did not seem to be organised at the same time and in the same socio-political space: At the entrance of Daguangming, a beautifully dressed female receptionist told journalists to come to the ball in the evening and promised them free dancing partners, while inside Mr. Wang Xiaolai was giving a speech on “the three kinds of obedience and four virtues of women” (三从四德). The meeting was held as a private event where no photography was allowed. The YWCA guaranteed that their meeting would be legal and civil, as protests or marching of any kind were forbidden and no slogan or banner was allowed at their upmarket meeting venue, the Huangjin Great Cinema. An English lady, Miss Hinter, was invited to offer the keynote speech, which was followed by the screening of the American film *the Wedding March*.⁴⁷³ The whole celebration ended with the singing of the “*Women’s Song*” (妇女之歌) of all the attendees. The celebration at Zhaofeng Park, however, created a completely different scenario, where Xu Guangping was speaking to students and young women activists in the rain, pronouncing women’s political rights at the top of her lungs. After the gathering, the approximately 20,000 women marched from Zhaofeng Park to the Bund. Their march in the rain created such a sensation in Shanghai after

⁴⁷² *Da Gong Bao*, March 8, 1946.

⁴⁷³ Di Lin, “Shanghai de sange funüjie” [Three Women’s Day Celebrations in Shanghai], *Fun ü Xunkan* Vol. 1 Issue 12 (1946), source from *Yunnan fun ü yundongshi ziliao 3C* [The Historical Materials of Women’s Movements in Yunnan Province Vol. 3C] (Yuannan fun ü yundong lianhehui press, 1983), 378.

eight years of Japanese occupation that a fascinated local resident was even hit and killed by a passing tram while watching the march.⁴⁷⁴

These three “Women’s Day” celebrations with different aims and audiences demonstrate the lack of integration and cooperation among women’s groups in Shanghai after the War. And that was not the only problem. The lack of trust between KMT authorities and non-KMT organisations made it difficult for the CWA to establish an organisation and start activities in Shanghai, let alone to expand left-wing women’s networks in public. As *Da Gong Bao* (大公報) reported, the Shanghai Women’s Association had planned its inaugural meeting and first election on 7 March at the YWCA near the Baxian Bridge. However, the YWCA changed its working schedule following the request of the Shanghai Municipal Police and therefore refused to offer the meeting hall on the day. Although the Shanghai Women’s Association managed to find another meeting venue, the inaugural meeting was still under observation by a police officer, who was sent from the KMT to keep a close eye on the activities of the Shanghai Women’s Association.⁴⁷⁵

The development of the China Women’s Association in Beiping was equally chaotic. Led by Liu Qingyang, the Beiping Women’s Association became active in public during the anti-civil war movements in 1946, especially after the Shen Chong Incident.⁴⁷⁶ At the World Congress of Women in New York, the CWA chair Li Dequan demanded in her speech that U.S. troops should be withdrawn from China and the U.S. government should stop aiding Chiang Kai-shek in the Civil War. Soon after Li’s speech, the KMT Beiping Municipal Women’s Community and the KMT Beiping Women’s Association for Education Promotion published a joint statement in *Huabei Ribao* (華北日報), condemning Li Dequan for her “serious impediment to national interest” and denying Li’s representation of Chinese

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ *Da Gong Bao*, March 7, 1946.

⁴⁷⁶ The Incident refers to the alleged rape of Shen Chong, a Peking University student, by two U.S. marines on Christmas Eve of 1946, which aroused a wave of anti-American protests in Beiping and other cities of China. Please refer to Zhang Hong, *America Perceived: The Making of Chinese Images of the United States, 1945-1953* (USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 81-122.

women.⁴⁷⁷ The tension between the CWA and local KMT authorities increased in 1947 after the peace negotiation between the two major parties had failed. As a result, the leaders of Beijing Women's Association such as Liu Qingyang and Zhang Xiaomei were transferred out of Beijing, and the Association ceased activities in public.⁴⁷⁸

In light of this, although the CWA provided left-wing women intellectuals with a new political platform after the War of Resistance, it did not immediately replace local women's organisations led by or affiliated with the KMT, nor did it grow to be a centralised national women's organisation with a clear structure, agenda and financial support. Left-wing women intellectuals who returned to east China in 1946 still continued to engage with different political parties and organisations while trying to relocate their political networks during the Civil War. The prospect of reconciliation between the KMT and the CCP under a coalition government on the one hand, and the fear of an expanded civil war on the other, made women intellectuals' political identification during this period an uneasy process marked by confusion and uncertainty. The political experience of Xia Bengying, as introduced at the beginning of the thesis, reflects the confusion and uncertainty of women intellectuals facing their various political tasks, roles and identities after the War.

In the summer of 1945, Xia Bengying had finished her study at Chaoyang University and wanted to find a job in Chongqing. She was hired by Zhong Fuguang to teach in a girls' middle school in Jiangbei district. After having worked at Zhong's school for about six months, Xia learnt that Zhong Fuguang and Zhong's friend Lao Junzhan were both founding members of the CWA. Under their influence, Xia also joined the CWA and helped establish a small women's reading society in Jiangbei district, which functioned as a sub-group of the CWA. What Xia Bengying had not expected was that Lao Junzhan, a leader of the SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA, also held a high position at the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee. More surprisingly for Xia, in order to curtail the power possessed by

⁴⁷⁷ *Huabei Ribao*, November 15, 1946; Liu Ningyuan, *Beijing jinxindai fun iyundong shi* [The Modern-Contemporary History of the Women's Movement in Beijing] (Beijing Press, 2009), 219-220.

⁴⁷⁸ Liu, *Beijing jinxindai fun iyundong shi*, 220.

the KMT leader Liu Hengjing and Liu's followers from the C.C. Clique, Lao Junzhan asked Xia to join the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee as her assistant. With Lao Junzhan's help, Xia soon became the director-general of the Committee and moved to Nanjing in 1946.⁴⁷⁹

Lao Junzhan and Xia Bengying's involvement in both the CWA and the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee shows that women intellectuals were still able to develop political relations with both major parties in the post-war period. These political relations and networks, on the one hand, increased the channels of their political participation, and on the other hand, helped reinforce the CCP's united-front framework. In Xia Bengying's case, it was very likely that she had maintained one-way communication with Lao Junzhan and Zhong Fuguang within the CWA. Therefore her direct engagement with the CCP was limited while her left-wing identity was unexposed. Notwithstanding her participation in the CWA in Chongqing, she was elected as a KMT candidate to the National Assembly. Between 1946 and 1947, as a female candidate selected from a KMT women's organisation, Xia Bengying successfully managed her electoral campaign. According to Xia's memoir, she decided to participate in the election because she would like to have a stronger position within the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee in order to contain the power of the C.C. Clique women. And the reason that she finally outshone her competitors was, as Xia put it, "Many famous 'KMT Misses' came to bribe the electoral committee therefore choosing any one of them would obviously upset the rest, so the electoral committee considered me instead—a new face with no strong political background."⁴⁸⁰

Xia Bengying's political experience inside the CWA and the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee reflects the different political roles women intellectuals adopted and the complex political relations they maintained in the immediate post-war period. Compared with the political claims uttered by women intellectuals at the CWA tea reception, Lao Junzhan and Xia Bengying's plan to curb the arrogance of the C.C. women within the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee sounded much less ambitious than stopping the

⁴⁷⁹ Xia, "Wode xiaoshi" 1949, NMA, 7004-1-1, 12.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 14-16.

Civil War and achieving democracy. Furthermore, for many women intellectuals like Lao Junzhan and Xia Bengying, taking political sides between the KMT and the CCP was still a difficult choice after the War. Joining in KMT Central Women's Movement Committee did not mean that they agreed with the extreme anti-CCP strategy endorsed by the C.C. Clique, whilst participating in the CWA did not mean that they converted to communism. As explained by Xia Bengying in 1949, the reason she joined the CWA was simply to "achieve democratic politics",⁴⁸¹ a political goal she could expect to reach with any political party as long as democratic governance was promised.

Similar to Lao Junzhan and Xia Bengying, Tan Tiwu also managed to maintain her political engagement with different parties in Nanjing after the War. In 1947, when the journalist of *Modern Women* Lu Huinian interviewed Tan Tiwu, Tan was already a KMT legislator and one of the only two women legislators at the KMT Legislative Yuan. In the 1930s and 1940s, Tan Tiwu had been working for the Ministry of the Interior for 15 years first in Nanjing and later in Chongqing. Although she had also been involved in different left-wing women's organisations in wartime Chongqing and become a founding member of the Nanjing branch of the CWA, she still tried to keep a neutral political stance after the War:

I do not know what is leftist and what is rightist, but I know what is right and what is wrong. I never care about personal interests in politics but I do have a national consciousness. I love the nation. Working at the Ministry of the Interior, I understand that in order to save the nation, we need to save the people. I have always believed in peace, independence, democracy and freedom for my country, regardless if it means that I am a leftist or rightist.⁴⁸²

However, women intellectuals' political engagement and identification after the war, marked by their scattered networks, unclear roles and blurred political boundaries, were soon to change. In 1947, the peace negotiation between the KMT and the CCP finally broke. Blaming the DL leaders for their cooperation with the CCP in protesting a KMT-controlled

⁴⁸¹ Xia Bengying personal documents, NMA, 7004-1-1.

⁴⁸² Hui Nian, "Jieshao liwei Tan Tiwu nüshi" [About Tan Tiwu, a Member of the Legislative Committee], *Modern Women* Vol. 9 Issue 5 (1947): 10.

National Assembly, Chang Kai-shek forced the DL to dissolve; in the meantime, the KMT started searching for and arresting both communists and DL members. The dissolution of the DL, as Gerry Groot puts it, was another victory of the CCP seeking to prove to intellectuals that “to sit on the fence is impossible”.⁴⁸³ For Chinese women intellectuals, if it had already been much more difficult to keep a neutral stance between the two major parties after the New Fourth Army Incident, it was impossible after 1947.

Leaning to the CCP: Women intellectuals in Hong Kong in 1947

In the eyes of the Nationalist government, DL members were no different from the communists. From 1946 onwards, the local DL branches organised intellectuals and students to protest against the Civil War and the unbearable living conditions—“the hunger”—caused by the recession and hyperinflation.⁴⁸⁴ In order to curb the student movements and purge the political left wing, the KMT sent secret orders to local universities and schools to warn them of the underground CCP and DL networks: “The underground communists, disguised as Democratic League members, have been infiltrating student bodies with their networks and inciting students to join an anti-civil war marching.” As soon as the DL was outlawed in 1947, the Education Bureau further ordered local universities and schools to fight both the “wicked CCP (奸党) and the wicked DL (奸盟) which are seeking to utilise student bodies to organise political movements.”⁴⁸⁵ Many DL leaders and members in Chengdu and Chongqing were arrested by the KMT secret police.⁴⁸⁶

The incompetence of the government to maintain economic, social and political order after the War and the KMT’s abuse of power disappointed DL members and democratic intellectuals who used to prefer a neutral position between the two major parties. As Edmund

⁴⁸³ Groot, *Managing Transitions*, 54.

⁴⁸⁴ For more information on the student anti-civil war movement, please see Pepper, *Civil War in China*, 42-51.

⁴⁸⁵ Secret orders from the KMT Yunnan Education Bureau, 6 July 1946, 31 March 1947, 12 December 1947, January 1948, Kunming Municipal Archives, 37-01-04.

⁴⁸⁶ Groot, *Managing Transitions*, 53-54.

Fung argues, “For these democratic intellectuals, by mid-1947, the Nationalist government had absolutely lost its legitimacy and moral leadership.”⁴⁸⁷ Many DL leaders and democratic intellectuals left the KMT-controlled cities to avoid political harassment, arrests and assassinations. In order to restructure their organisation, a group of DL leaders and intellectuals moved to Hong Kong. In January 1948, they called the third plenary of the first DL Central Committee and officially announced that the DL would cooperate with the CCP to achieve peace and democracy.⁴⁸⁸ Hong Kong once again became the political shelter for left-wing activists and democratic intellectuals who had escaped the KMT’s political persecution, as well as the space where women intellectuals’ political identification continued in favour of the CCP.

Liu-Wang Liming was one of the female DL leaders who went to Hong Kong in 1947 to help restore and restructure the organisation. However, this was not the first time for her to move to Hong Kong. In 1938, when her husband Liu Zhan’en, the president of Shanghai Huijiang University, was assassinated by Japanese agents, Liu-Wang Liming suddenly became a widow with three children and the next assassination target of the Japanese puppet troops in Shanghai. With no other choice, she asked the nanny to take her two sons to Shandong, while she escaped to Hong Kong with her only daughter. One year later, Liu-Wang Liming managed to leave Hong Kong for the hinterland and reunited with her children in Chongqing.⁴⁸⁹

During the War of Resistance, Liu-Wang Liming was praised as a women’s leader who embodied “the spirit of martyrdom” when fighting for peace, freedom and democracy.⁴⁹⁰ Her status as the widow of a national martyr further increased her political influence as a leader of the national resistance. Apart from sitting in the People’s Political Council as a delegate, she also became a member of the DL central committee and a founding member of the CWA. However, the political environment in wartime Chongqing was not entirely satisfactory for

⁴⁸⁷ Fung, *In Search of Chinese Democracy*, 307.

⁴⁸⁸ Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 326-328.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Si Nan, “Ji Liu-Wang Liming Xiansheng” [About Liu-Wang Liming], *Guoxun* [National Information] Vol. 1 Issue 4 (1947): 11.

Liu-Wang Liming. When asked about her experience as a delegate to the PPC during the War, she summarised it as follows, “sing high praises, make political declarations, meet VIPs and endure economic crisis.”⁴⁹¹ In 1947, when Liu-Wang Liming once again moved to Hong Kong, she was not running away from Japanese agents but from the KMT’s tightened political control. As she told journalists in Hong Kong: “The political situation in the mainland is too bad to do anything, so I had to come to Hong Kong to continue my career.”⁴⁹²

Facing the shrinking spaces for their political participation in the KMT-controlled areas, more and more women intellectuals moved to Hong Kong during the Civil War. Liu-Wang Liming was joined by Yang Moxia, Zhang Manjun, Li Jiansheng and some other women intellectuals from the mainland to establish a South China branch of the WCTU.⁴⁹³ As a member of the DL Kunming branch, Li Wenyi also went to Hong Kong in 1947 to help with the restructuring of the DL. These women intellectuals organised dinner parties, forums and study groups to maintain contacts and expand networks. In her memoir, Li Wenyi described the busy social life she had in Hong Kong:

Guo Moruo and his wife Yu Lique organised a dinner party at home and invited about thirty people: old friends, women intellectuals and wives of DL leaders in Hong Kong [...] Soon after, DL leader Zhang Bojun and his wife Li Jiansheng hosted a similar party at their home. Cao Mengjun just moved into a new flat therefore she insisted on inviting all of her female friends for dinner at home, although her husband Wang Kunlun was still in France at the time. Hu Naiqiu, the NSA leader from Shanghai who had helped with the publication of *Women’s Life* in Chongqing, also moved here. She organised a weekly study group at her home, which brought together several women elites including Zhang Manjun [widow of Li Gongpu, the DL leader assassinated by KMT agents in Kunming, 1946], Shen Pu [the

⁴⁹¹ Ibid, 12.

⁴⁹² Ibid, 11.

⁴⁹³ Huabei funü jiezhahui chengli yu huiyuan fazhan qingkuang [The Outline of the Establishment and Development of the North China Women Christian Temperance Union], (undated), oral material from Yang Moxia, Beijing Municipal Archives (BMA), 84-1-42, 4.

wife of *Da Gong Bao* journalist Fan Changjiang] and Gong Peng [the wife of the famous diplomat Qiao Guanhua].⁴⁹⁴

Apart from networking among old friends from the mainland, these women intellectuals also participated in local women's forums organised by the Hong Kong Women's Association, where they met with local women activists. The network of women intellectuals in Hong Kong was further expanded when Hu Yuzhi and Shen Zijiu arrived in April 1948, after over seven years of life in exile in Indonesia and Singapore.⁴⁹⁵

The reorganisation of the DL in Hong Kong and the official cooperation between the DL and the CCP further shifted the spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement and identification during the Civil War. Dissatisfied with the KMT's political performance while engaged in the CCP's united-front framework, women intellectuals who had relocated to Hong Kong finally sided with the political left wing. As Mary Mazur argues, during this establishment period, members of democratic parties joined willingly in the transitional realignment of the United Front.⁴⁹⁶ This "realigned" United Front between the CCP and the minor political parties, not only appealed to the DL members who moved to Hong Kong in 1947, but also to the majority of intellectuals who stayed in mainland China during the Civil War.

Surviving the Civil War: Women intellectuals in the KMT-occupied cities

For the majority of women intellectuals who endured both political persecution and economic disorder in the KMT-controlled cities during the Civil War, their final leaning to the left was, first and foremost, because the Nationalist government left them no hope for survival, both physically and politically. The recession and hyperinflation in the late 1940s significantly hampered women intellectuals' political organisation and activities. Keeping in

⁴⁹⁴ Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 329.

⁴⁹⁵ Yu You, *Hu Yuzhi* (Qunyan Press, 2011), 326.

⁴⁹⁶ Mary G. Mazur, "The United Front Redefined for the Party-State: A Case Study of Transition and Legitimation" in Timothy Cheek and Tony Saich eds., *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 51.

a low political profile and securing a source of income was the only way for some independent women intellectuals to survive the Civil War. Hu Ziyi stayed in Shanghai with her daughter while her ex-husband, the famous DL leader and financier Zhang Naiqi went to Hong Kong. Working for a bank, Hu Ziyi witnessed how the recession and hyperinflation destroyed people's lives. She experienced the panic-buying and hoarding among housewives and shared their concerns about the future:

Feeling anxious and sad, all the housewives in town joined the scalpers in the crazy buying and hoarding. They tried to buy anything available no matter whether they needed it or not. Shops in Shanghai were emptied within a day. And since yesterday, some women even started queuing up to buy coffins.⁴⁹⁷

The sight of housewives queuing up to buy coffins not only illustrates the socio-economic disorder in post-war Shanghai, but also reflects the pessimistic view of the future shared among the locals. Given the extreme political and economic conditions, it became more and more difficult for women intellectuals who stayed in Shanghai and Nanjing to support their political networks and organisations. Since 1948, a number of leaders of the WAC and the KMT Central Women's Committee had gone to Guangzhou and Taiwan to prepare for the retreat of the Nationalist government to Taiwan, whilst the majority were dismissed and returned to their hometowns. By the time the Nationalist Government retreated to Taiwan, there were only three women leaders left in the KMT Women's Movement Committee.⁴⁹⁸ The rest of women elites and intellectuals who stayed in the KMT-controlled cities could only wait for the Civil War to be over and the current situation to change.

Parks M. Coble has pointed out that, during the Civil War, not only had the economy been shattered by fighting and hyperinflation, but the end of extraterritoriality during the War further eliminated the "neutral zones" that had given the many nongovernmental

⁴⁹⁷ Hu Ziyi, "Zhufu zai qianggouchao zhong" [Housewives in the Trend of Buying and Hoarding], *Modern Women* Vol 12 Issue 5 (1946).

⁴⁹⁸ Hong, *Zhongguo guomindang fun ü gongzuo zhi yanjiu*, 321.

organisations a degree of autonomy when confronting the Nanjing leaders.⁴⁹⁹ As Liu-Wang Liming's case demonstrates, the spaces for women intellectuals' political organisation quickly shrank after 1947 and the political situation became too chaotic for them to do anything.⁵⁰⁰ Almost all CWA branches in the mainland were forced to cease activities. In Beiping, although Pu Jiexiu and Peng Zigang were still trying to maintain underground activities among local career women and housewives, the Beiping Women's Association became virtually paralysed after Liu Qingyang had left for Xibaipo in September 1948.⁵⁰¹ Shi Liang, Hu Ziying and Ni Feijun in Shanghai also felt the difficulty of continuing the organisation of the Shanghai Women's Association after 1947. After she had returned to Shanghai, Shi Liang worked as a lawyer under strict surveillance by KMT agents. However, as soon as the retreating Nationalist government started murdering communists as well as any activists suspected of being communists or left-wing political leaders, Shi Liang became one of the most-wanted in town. The KMT agents arrested almost all her relatives and household staff and tortured them in order to know her whereabouts, while she was moving from one place to another to escape the KMT's order of execution.⁵⁰²

Under the harsh economic and political conditions, cooperation with the CCP became the only available choice for many women intellectuals if they hoped to achieve peace and democracy. In May 1948, the CCP decided to invite prominent intellectuals in the KMT-controlled areas to Xibaipo, the erstwhile location of the CCP headquarters, to help prepare a new Political Consultative Conference. This call, like the CCP's call for an anti-Japanese United Front in 1935, came right in time to stimulate intellectuals who had been confused and frustrated during the Civil War.

⁴⁹⁹ Coble, "The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai", 130.

⁵⁰⁰ Si, "Ji Liu-Wang Liming Xiansheng", 11.

⁵⁰¹ Liu, *Beijing jinxiandai fun iyundong shi*, 220.

⁵⁰² Shi, *Shi Liang zishu*, 71-72.

Hu Yuzhi and Shen Zijiu were among the first batch of intellectuals who went to Xibaipo.⁵⁰³ In August 1948, the couple adopted disguises as overseas Chinese going to do business and took a British ship en route from Hong Kong to Incheon, South Korea. The ship stopped at Shanghai for half a day so that passengers could go to exchange currencies. Taking advantage of the situation, the couple temporarily disembarked to visit Hu Yuzhi's cousin Hu Ziying, who was also Shen Zijiu's old friend at the NSA and the WAC in the 1930s. Since Hu Yuzhi and Shen Zijiu had both lived in Shanghai for a long time before the War, they managed to contact a few old friends, from whom they learnt Hu's new address. To avoid the ubiquitous KMT secret agents, Shen Zijiu called her brother Shen Xueyuan and asked him to pick them up using his private car. When the couple finally arrived at Hu Ziying's home, Hu was already waiting for them at the door with a hot bath and meal prepared. After learning about the miserable political and economic situation in Shanghai from relatives and friends, Hu Yuzhi and Shen Zijiu were certain about the forthcoming communist takeover of China.⁵⁰⁴

Like in Hong Kong where the CCP co-opted the DL in order to reinforce its united-front framework, in mainland China the Party also sought to enhance its political influence over democratic intellectuals. Not only did the CCP try to reassure left-wing intellectuals of the Party's determination to achieve peace and democracy, but it also searched for more supporters from the KMT side. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Ni Feijun, the wife of the erstwhile Chongqing Mayor and KMT general He Yaozu, had developed a good personal relationship with Deng Yingchao at No. 50 Zengjiayan in wartime Chongqing. Following the rumours of her being an underground communist, distrust between her husband and Chiang Kai-shek increased. He Yaozu encountered setbacks and confusion in his political career as well as in his marriage with Ni Feijun. After the War had finished, the couple moved back to Shanghai, but the various life changes they had both been through further deepened their marriage crisis. Ni Feijun went to see Deng Yingchao and revealed her intention of seeking a

⁵⁰³ "Hu Yuzhi canjia kaiguodadian qianhou" [Hu Yuzhi before and after Participating in the Founding Ceremony of the PRC], *Guangming Ribao*, September 25, 2009.

⁵⁰⁴ Yu, *Hu Yuzhi*, 237-239.

divorce. Much to Ni's surprise, Deng was not at all supportive of her divorce. Instead of encouraging Ni to terminate her relationship with He Yaozu and therefore to arouse the KMT's further suspicion, Deng was more interested in using Ni Feijun's influence on her husband to convince this KMT general to support the leftist agenda.⁵⁰⁵

Deng Yingchao's plan to win over the KMT high official He Yaozu by using the influence of He's wife Ni Feijun is not the only example of how the CCP had manipulated women intellectuals' personal networks for its own political gain. Before the Pingjin Campaign,⁵⁰⁶ in order to defeat the KMT general Fu Zuoyi's army, the CCP first contacted Fu's daughter Fu Dongju, who had been involved in the communist network in Tianjin as a journalist of *Da Gong Bao*. Fu Dongju hence returned to Beijing to stay with her father, with the secret mission of collecting military information for the CCP and persuading her father to give up defence. According to a CCP radio operator, during the Pingjin Campaign, most information about General Fu was provided by Fu Dongju. The information was sent out so quickly and frequently that "what happened to General Fu yesterday would be known by the CCP campaign headquarters the next morning."⁵⁰⁷ Fu Dongju's information helped the CCP to control the hard negotiation with Fu Zuoyi and eventually to achieve the peaceful takeover of Beiping.

The above cases demonstrate the increasing difficulty for women intellectuals to continue political organisation and activities in the KMT-held areas and the CCP's successful enhancement of its hegemony over democratic intellectuals during the Civil War. The

⁵⁰⁵ Zhang Qifan "Yiyan zhongyu jiuding—Ji Dengdajie yu Ni Feijun de youyi" [A Word Which Carries Weight—the Friendship of Deng Yingchao and Ni Feijun], in Jin Ruiying ed., *Deng Yingchao-Yidai weida de nixing* [Deng Yingchao-A Great Woman of the Generation] (Shanxi Renmin Press, 1989), 355.

⁵⁰⁶ Also known as the battle of Beiping and Tianjin, the Pingjin Campaign is one of the three major campaigns at the late stage of the Civil War. The campaign finished with the CCP's takeover of Beiping after General Fu Zuoyi had negotiated a peace settlement with the CCP. For more information, please see Harold M. Tanner, *The Battle for Manchuria and the Fate of China: Siping, 1946* (USA: Indiana University Press, 2013).

⁵⁰⁷ Ka Di, "Zai Liu Ren shenbian zuo jiyaoyuan" [Being a Cryptographer by the Side of Liu Ren], *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian* 39 [the Selected Cultural and Historical Materials Vol. 39] (Beijing Press, 1990), 63.

network of personal ties and social relations maintained among women intellectuals, as shown in the cases of Shen Ziji, Ni Feijun and Fu Dongju, supported the united-front framework and facilitated the CCP's access to the urban areas controlled by the KMT. After the DL had been outlawed by the KMT and its leaders had affirmed their political identification with the CCP, the spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement in the KMT-controlled areas further shrank. The wartime political institutions and organisations such as the PPC, the WAC and the NSA, which had offered the "neutral zone" for women intellectuals to engage in national politics, failed to sustain as cross-party political platforms after 1947. In this situation, when the CCP called the new People's Consultative Conference in 1948, going to Xibaipo to build a new democratic government was the best available choice for women intellectuals who were scattered in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing and the rest of the cities still under the KMT's control.

Entering Beijing⁵⁰⁸ and preparing for the All-China Women's Federation

By the end of 1948, the People's Liberation Army⁵⁰⁹ had secured military victory in the Liaoshen Campaign in northeast China and was advancing quickly in the Huaihai Campaign in central China and the Pingjin Campaign in north China.⁵¹⁰ In the meantime, in order to expedite its political victory over the KMT, the CCP invited prominent intellectuals and social elites in the KMT-controlled cities and in Hong Kong to come to the "liberated" areas and to join in the CCP to establish a new democratic government. In September 1948, the first group of intellectuals from Hong Kong, including Shen Ziji and Hu Yuzhi, finally arrived in Xibaipo. After the CCP had taken over Shenyang in November, Guo Moruo, Yu

⁵⁰⁸ Beiping was renamed as Beijing since 27 September 1949.

⁵⁰⁹ After the War of Resistance, the CCP merged the New Fourth Army and the Eighth Route Army and renamed its force the "People's Liberation Army".

⁵¹⁰ Known as the CCP's three major military campaigns against the KMT during the Civil War, the Liaoshen Campaign, Huaihai Campaign and Pingjin Campaign lasted from September 1948 to January 1949. By the end of the three major campaigns, Chiang Kai-shek's main forces had been destroyed and the PLA began moving across the Yangtze in the spring of 1949. Please see Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 343.

Liqun, Cao Mengjun, Li Dequan, Li Wenyi and Xu Guangping, among other DL leaders and intellectuals from Hong Kong and Shanghai, arrived in Shenyang and temporarily stayed together in a hotel.

For Shen Ziji, the journey to Xibaipo in 1948 through the Civil War battlefield in north China was not any easier than her journey from Shanghai to Wuhan ten years before. On 27 August, the British ship Shen Ziji and Hu Yuzhi took from Hong Kong arrived in Dalian port, which was under the control of Soviet troops at the time. The couple stayed in Dalian with the local communist leader Li Yimang for a few days before taking another boat from Dalian to Jiaodong Peninsula. They stayed in a fishing village on an island for another few days, and finally joined Chen Yi's wife Zhang Xi heading for Shijiazhuang. On 24 September, the couple finally arrived in Shijiazhuang, where they met their old friend Wang Renshu, among some other intellectuals who had come from Hong Kong to Shijiazhuang through Tianjin, a city still under the control of KMT troops at that time.⁵¹¹

Having travelled a long way from Singapore, Shen Ziji and Hu Yuzhi were treated as the most honoured guests by CCP leaders in Xibaipo. It was already 3am on the morning of the 29th when they finally arrived in Xibaipo, but Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao still got up to welcome them in person. The CCP Social Department organised a welcome party for them on the next day. And in the following days, Shen Ziji and Hu Yuzhi were invited to join CCP leaders at different meetings and dinners. Mao Zedong also came to meet with them in a dinner party followed by a ball. Mao was fond of dancing, but he was surprised to know that, as returning social elites from Singapore, Shen Ziji and Hu Yuzhi had never learnt ballroom dance.⁵¹²

The same good treatment was also offered to intellectuals arriving in Shenyang. As Li Wenyi remembered, the staff from the CCP United-Front Department (统战部) in Shenyang treated them as privileged guests invited by Mao Zedong. Not only was good food served to them in their hotel every day, but a tailor was sent to make new Zhongshan suits, new coats, new leather hats and shoes for each of them. Just as Shen Ziji and Hu Yuzhi enjoyed

⁵¹¹ "Hu Yuzhi canjian kaiguodadian qianhou"; Yu, *Hu Yuzhi*, 330.

⁵¹² "Hu Yuzhi canjian kaiguodadian qianhou".

ballroom dance in Xibaipo, the group of intellectuals in Shenyang was able to briefly resume the old life and leisure time that they had enjoyed so much as intellectuals before the War: Guo Moruo practiced calligraphy every day in his room and then went out to purchase antiques and paintings; women intellectuals such as Cao Mengjun, Li Dequan and Li Wenyi also had a good time choosing and buying artworks in the street and sharing their favourite pieces with each other.⁵¹³

However, the CCP did not invite these prominent women intellectuals to the “liberated” area to enjoy their old privileged life. Between 20 September and 6 October 1948, the Central Committee of the CCP organised a workshop among women intellectuals in Xibaipo in order to discuss the preparation for the first National Conference of Women’s Representatives and for the establishment of the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF).⁵¹⁴ Not only CCP women leaders in Xibaipo, but also those women intellectuals in Shenyang were all involved in the detailed preparatory work. Li Wenyi was tasked by the CCP women’s leader Cai Chang with reading all of the translated documents collected from the World Congress of Women in order to draft a report on women’s movements in different countries during the Second World War. She was requested to emphasise women’s movements in the Soviet Union and in the “liberated areas” (解放区) of China. The problem was that Li Wenyi had stayed in the KMT-controlled areas during the War and therefore knew little about women’s movements overseas or in the “liberated areas”. Although she found the task extremely difficult, she still managed to finish a 10,000-word report and submitted it to Cai Chang for her use at the National Conference of Women’s Representatives.⁵¹⁵

The preparation for the National Conference of Women’s Representatives was further sped up after these women intellectuals had arrived in Beijing. As the most important city in North China and the city that represented Chinese imperial power, Beijing was peacefully taken

⁵¹³ Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 362.

⁵¹⁴ *Zhonghua quanguo funü lianhehui sishinian* [*The All-China Women’s Federation 1949-1989*] (Zhongguo funü Press, 1991), 1-2.

⁵¹⁵ Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 363.

over by the CCP on 31 January 1949.⁵¹⁶ Women leaders and intellectuals who had scattered in different “liberated” areas in north China thus finally met again in Beijing. Li Wenyi and her peers took a special train from Shenyang to Beijing and moved into Beijing Hotel. Shen Zijiu and Hu Yuzhi, along with other intellectuals from Xibaipo, had already checked in the same hotel. In early March, the group of women intellectuals who had already arrived in Beijing, including Cao Mengjun, Shen Zijiu, Li Wenyi, Cai Chang, Deng Yingchao, Xu Guangping, Li Dequan, Zhao Shilan and others, formed the preparatory committee for the first National Conference of Women’s Representatives.⁵¹⁷

However, for these prominent women leaders and intellectuals coming from different social and political backgrounds, living together did not necessarily make working together easier. The first National Conference of Women’s Representatives, which had been scheduled for 8 March, the Women’s Day of 1949, had to be postponed to the 28th due to the short preparation time and also poor organisation for the event.⁵¹⁸ Competitions between CCP women leaders and non-CCP women intellectuals also resulted in frictions within the group, which inevitably dampened the enthusiasm of some non-CCP women intellectuals such as Li Wenyi.

An important task allocated to women intellectuals in Beijing Hotel was to draft a set of pamphlets on Chinese women’s movements during the War; each person was in charge of one part of the writing. When Li was working on her part, she was frequently interrupted by Shen Zijiu and some other women intellectuals, who checked her progress and pressed her to work faster. Probably feeling their distrust, Li Wenyi admitted that she had some difficulty finishing the writing alone because she had not participated in the Lushan Women’s Summit, nor had she been involved in Song Meiling’s WAC. Zhao Shilan, a communist leader from Chongqing Women’s Association, therefore volunteered to help. Although Li Wenyi felt

⁵¹⁶ Colin Mackerras, *China in Transformation: 1900-1949* (UK, USA: Routledge, 2014), 80.

⁵¹⁷ *Zhonghua quanguo fun ülianhehui sishinian*, 3.

⁵¹⁸ Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 364-365.

upset, she eventually let Zhao Shilan be in charge of her part of writing about women's organisations in the KMT-controlled areas.⁵¹⁹

In fact, if we compare the political experience of Li Wenyi and Zhao Shilan during the wartime period, it is obvious that Zhao Shilan was not a better candidate than Li Wenyi in terms of writing about women's organisations in the KMT-controlled areas. As the secretary-general of the CCP women's committee in the Sichuan region, Zhao Shilan was not involved in any women's organisation affiliated with the KMT or with any minor political parties, nor had she participated in the Lushan Women's Summit or the WAC. In contrast, having worked in Wuhan and Kunming during the War, Li Wenyi founded the Yunnan Women's Association and developed local women's networks across the KMT, the DL and the CCP. It is unclear how Zhao Shilan could manage the writing better than Li Wenyi, but the lack of trust and effective cooperation between these women intellectuals from different political backgrounds certainly started to appear as soon as they entered Beijing. And this time, instead of cooperating with women intellectuals from different political backgrounds, communist women leaders secured their superior position.

What further disappointed Li Wenyi was that, the credit of her work was taken by communist women leaders in the same way as it used to be taken by the powerful KMT women leaders in Kunming. The 10,000-word report Li Wenyi had written for Cai Chang was not used at the conference but published as an article without her permission. Worse still, even though she was the author of the article, Li Wenyi's name did not even appear anywhere in it.⁵²⁰ As previously shown in Chapter 5, Li Wenyi had been angry at the YWCA leaders in Kunming for the same reason and eventually withdrew from the YWCA to establish her own independent women's group. However, in 1949 in Beijing, to withdraw alone from the preparatory committee for the National Conference of Women's Representatives was clearly neither reasonable nor possible for women intellectuals who had come so far to support the CCP and to share its victory.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 365.

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 365-366.

Due to the continuous warfare and the divided territory in March 1949, the first National Conference of Women's Representatives was not one of the best organised conferences by the CCP. Between 24 March and 3 April, the Conference was held in Beijing with 476 representatives from across the country.⁵²¹ Who the representatives should be and which organisations they should represent, however, was not decided by a strict democratic process but by personal recommendation. Before the Conference, Deng Yingchao asked Li Wenyi who would be the best representatives for Yunnan. Yi Wenyi recommended Yang Moxia, the leader of the Yunnan Women's Association who had been working with Li in Kunming during the War, but the Yunnan Women's Association refused to be represented by Yang. The reason was that Yang Moxia took some public funds of the Association with her when she went to Hong Kong in 1947. Li Wenyi therefore recommended Fan Shujin and Lu Fan instead. However, at the conference, Li Wenyi did not see Fan Shujin and Lu Fan coming to represent the Yunnan Women's Association but two middle-school students who "still wore their hair in girly pig-tails". Fan Shujin and Lu Fan did not arrive in Beijing until the end of the conference due to the miscommunication and poor transportation.⁵²²

Li Wenyi and other women intellectuals' experience of preparing for the first National Conference of Women's Representatives and the ACWF suggests the lack of organisation and even trust among the women intellectuals who made their way to Beijing from different regions and backgrounds. CCP leaders had taken great effort to protect and maintain the broad network of social and political relations among women intellectuals during the wartime period, but they were not yet prepared for relocating and re-accommodating the divergent but at the same time interconnected organisations, groups, societies and networks of women intellectuals after 1949. As the next section shows, the establishment of the ACWF, which functioned as a "united-front" organisation under the CCP's control, did not result in a successful conclusion of the CCP's institutionalisation of women intellectuals' political networks.

⁵²¹ *Zhonghua quanguo fun ü lianhehui sishinian*, 4.

⁵²² Li, *The Memoir of Li Wenyi*, 366.

Confusion and conflicts: The integration of women intellectuals' networks into the ACWF

After the communist takeover, Beijing became the new capital of China and also the new hub of women intellectuals' political networks. Neil Diamand has argued: "The CCP's entrance into urban centres not only blurred the long-standing divide between public and private affairs, but also initiated the demise of social and political institutions that, prior to 1949, occupied the middle ground between state and society, such as native-place associations, guilds and student associations."⁵²³ Women intellectuals' organisations were also part of the social and political institutions threatened by the CCP's central control over the society. However, as this section shows, although the spaces for women intellectuals' political networking and engagement shifted significantly in a short period after the communist takeover, the integration of women intellectuals' political networks within the ACWF was a long and fragmented process marked by confusion and conflicts.

Instead of becoming a CCP women's organisation, the ACWF first functioned as a "united-front" institution for the purpose of accommodating the various political groups, societies and networks maintained by women intellectuals from different social and political backgrounds. Many prominent women leaders and elites who had participated in political institutions and women's organisations in the KMT-controlled areas during the War were "elected" into the executive and standing committees of the ACWF: Liu Qingyang and Shi Liang were both members of the executive committee, while Li Dequan, Xu Guangping, Shen Zijiu, Cao Mengjun, Li Wenyi and Liu-Wang Liming became members of the standing committee.⁵²⁴ And until the late 1950s, the ACWF did not in fact replace all the other women's organisations. The CWA, the WCTU and the YWCA, for example, all continued

⁵²³ Neil J. Diamant, *Revolutionizing the Family: Politics, Love and Divorce in Urban and Rural China 1949-1968* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 47.

⁵²⁴ *Zhonghua quanguo fun ü lianhehui sishinian*, 6.

their activities with relatively independent leadership in Beijing, despite having joined the ACWF as member groups.⁵²⁵

In 1949, Liu Qingyang reformed the Beiping Women's Association as a branch of the CWA in Beijing. She set up an office at her own residence in Chunshu Hutong, Xixie Street, west city of Beijing. The new Beijing Women's Association started with neither a complicated structure nor a clear agenda, and like many women's groups during the War, it functioned more like a workshop with study groups organised at the homes of its members.⁵²⁶ Between 1950 and 1951, the membership of the Association increased to 1,300 with sub-branches set up in different districts of Beijing. But problems started to appear after 1952: more and more members left the Association after they had found a full-time job, while many leaders also left for positions at the ACWF and other political institutions. The network development of the Beijing Women's Association slowed down. Some women intellectuals in Beijing therefore complained that "the China Women's Association has been swallowed by the ACWF after liberation."⁵²⁷

Conflicts among women leaders within the Beijing Women's Association also obstructed the organisation's development. According to the internal documents of the ACWF, some women leaders in Beijing seemed to have overestimated their achievements during the wartime period and therefore became "difficult" and "arrogant".⁵²⁸ In 1952, Liu Qingyang wrote to Zhang Xiaomei, the CCP leader and chairwomen of the ACWF Beijing branch, to seek help with the "exhausting job of mediating between some directors of the Beijing Women's Association":

Although problems only exist between a few people, to mediate between them becomes more difficult day by day. [To solve the problem between Li Jiansheng, Qian Zhenjuan and Wang Feng], I have suggested to Li Jiansheng and Qian Zhenjuan that they should criticise

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁵²⁶ Beijing funü lianyihui gongzuo gaikuang 1949-1956 [The Work Summary of the Beijing Women's Association 1949-1956], 11 September, 1956, BMA, 84-3-45, 1-3.

⁵²⁷ Dui zhongguo funü lianyihui tongzhi de yijian [The Suggestions to the China Women's Association], (undated), BMA, 84-1-42, 026.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

themselves before giving advice to other people, because in this way, we can all improve and reform the organisation together. Li Jiansheng replied that she did not understand the reason to make self-criticism. It took me a long time to persuade Li Jiansheng to conciliate Wang Feng. But bearing a strong grudge, Wang Feng's supporters still sent me a letter with complaints. This is why I asked you [Zhang Xiaomei] to talk to Wang Feng in person, and only after that, the three of them finally found peace with one another.⁵²⁹

Li Jiansheng, the wife of the DL leader Zhang Bojun, and Wang Feng, the sister of Wang Kunlun, the leader of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang,⁵³⁰ had both been involved in various women's organisations during the wartime period and held complex social and political relations. As discussed in the previous chapters, disagreements and antagonisms had been common among women intellectuals during the War despite their shared goal of "national Resistance". What was new to them after 1949 was to conduct self-criticism before giving a different opinion and to have "heart-to-heart" talks (*jiaoxin* 交心) with a CCP leader in case of further problems. For these "difficult" and "arrogant" women leaders who had refused to subject to the KMT's political pressure during the War, they found themselves in a difficult position adopting the new way of communication under the CCP.

The China WCTU was another women's organisation that struggled to continue within the CCP's united-front framework after 1949. Because the organisation received direct support from the World WCTU rather than from the CCP, its leader Liu-Wang Liming had expected to maintain it as an independent women's organisation. Although she was selected into the standing committee of the ACWF and the CPPCC, Liu-Wang Liming treated her work at the WCTU as her own career after the War. In Beijing, she rented a big courtyard house in Xisi Hutong as the headquarters of China WCTU, where she also organised a kindergarten and a women's school. In order to continue the network she had achieved through organising the South China WCTU in Hong Kong, Liu-Wang Liming resumed the South China WCTU in

⁵²⁹ A private letter from Liu Qingyang to Zhang Xiaomei, (undated), BMA, 84-1-42, 031.

⁵³⁰ Established in 1948 in Hong Kong, the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (*Minge*) is one of the existing eight minor political parties and groups in China.

Beijing in August 1949 and renamed it the North China WCTU. This organisation brought together many women intellectuals and elites who had been working together with Liu-Wang Liming in Hong Kong in 1947, such as Yang Moxia, Zhang Manjun and Li Jiansheng. Fu Xuewen, the previous vice-chair of the SSCA Women's Committee in Chongqing, was elected to be the chairwoman. In less than a year, the North China WCTU had more than 800 members.⁵³¹

However, Liu-Wang Liming soon realised that although the China WCTU was not politically or financially dependent on the CCP, it was still impossible for her to make decisions by herself as the chair. As her personal assistant Huang Fuqiang remembered, Liu-Wang Liming maintained frequent correspondence with WCTU leaders in the US, the UK, Australia and other countries; she sent out dozens of English letters around 1950 to enhance the transnational connections between the China WCTU and the World WCTU. In 1950, on behalf of China, Liu-Wang Liming also attended the 17th World Conference of the WCTU in Bremen, West Germany. However, the autonomy enjoyed by the China WCTU did not last long. When Liu-Wang Liming planned to attend the 18th World Conference of the WCTU in Hastings, England in 1952, some officials, whose names were not given in Huang Fuqiang's memoir, tried to stop her. Huang Fuqiang once heard Liu-Wang Liming yelling on the phone, frustrated, "you can be your [Party] officials as you please, and I can go abroad as I want, how would I affect you and why should anyone try to stop me?" She went to Zhou Enlai for advice, and Zhou told her: "If you insist on going, you can go; I will be responsible for the consequences." To avoid causing troubles to Zhou, Liu-Wang Liming eventually gave up the trip.⁵³²

It is unclear why some Party officials had tried to stop Liu-Wang Liming from attending a conference abroad, but this was certainly only the beginning of misfortune in her professional and personal life after 1949. In 1952, Zhang Xiaomei received an anonymous report entitled

⁵³¹ Huabei funü jiezhijhui chengli yu huiyuan fazhan qingkuang, (undated), BMA, 84-1-42, 5-6.

⁵³² Huang Fuqiang, "Wosuo zhidao de Liu-Wang Liming" [The Liu-Wang Liming I Know], *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian 36* [the Selected Cultural and Historical Materials Vol. 36] (Beijing Press, 1990), 143-144.

“To Chairwoman Zhang, and please consider whether to show it to Peng Zhen and Liu Ren”. It is highly likely that the report was written by one or several high-ranking women leaders who not only knew Liu-Wang Liming well in person, but who also knew the CCP hierarchy well enough to ask Zhang Xiaomei to consider whether to pass it on to the Beijing Municipal Party Secretary Peng Zhen and Peng’s deputy Liu Ren.

Written in a very informal manner, this report—more than 10 pages—questioned Liu-Wang Liming’s personal property and savings, her political behaviour and her social relations. According to the report, Liu-Wang Liming not only kept some secret funds in the U.S. under the name of the WCTU but also had some suspicious income from her mining business; she embezzled funds and donations received by China WCTU and never kept transparent financial records at local WCTU branches. Worse still, the report pointed out that Liu-Wang was politically untrustworthy: She stayed up all night to listen to the Voice of America, and then she sent her translated transcripts somewhere for publication. She also showed sympathy for anti-revolutionaries and expressed her fear of U.S. power during the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea (*Kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng* 抗美援朝战争).⁵³³ Last but not least, the report detailed the suspicious relationships Liu-Wang Liming maintained with rich people and officials in Hong Kong and the mainland, some of whom even had contacts with KMT special agents in Taiwan.⁵³⁴

It is difficult to judge whether the above criticisms of Liu-Wang Liming were entirely groundless, but we can be sure that some of the facts were exaggerated or twisted. According to Huang Fuqiang, the World WCTU had been providing Liu-Wang with funds to support the activities of the WCTU in China since the 1930s. By 1949, the China WCTU had approximately 5,000 USD saved in the U.S., but Liu-Wang Liming never touched this money.

⁵³³ Commonly known as the Korean War (1950-1953) fought between the North and South Korea. While a United Nations force led by the U.S. was fighting for the South, China intervened in the conflicts and fought for the North. During the war, the CCP also mobilised mass movements in China for aiding North Korea and resisting the U.S.. For more information, please see Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁵³⁴ An anonymous report to Zhang Xiaomei, (undated), BMA, 84-1-42, 8-16.

She opened a coal mine at Mentougou after she had moved to Beijing in 1949, but the mine was soon transferred into “public-private joint management” (公私合营), thus it is also questionable whether Liu-Wang had personally benefited much from this business.⁵³⁵ After Zhang Xiaomei had received the report, the ACWF Beijing branch decided to conduct a thorough investigation of the case.⁵³⁶ The result of this investigation is unknown, but the fact that Liu-Wang Liming still maintained her positions within the ACWF and the China WCTU until 1957 proved that she was not suspected or attacked, at least not immediately.

Nonetheless, it was only a matter of time before Liu-Wang Liming got herself into bigger troubles. As Huang Fuqiang mentioned in his memoir: “Liu-Wang Liming always worked late at night and woke up after 10am, so she never answered phone calls before 10am; when she talked to people, she sounded quite condescending and arrogant; therefore she offended a lot of people.”⁵³⁷ This is likely to be the real reason why Liu-Wang Liming displeased some people around her and why she bore the brunt in the upcoming anti-rightist campaigns—not only because she was suspected of being a spy for the U.S., but also because she was resented for being an “arrogant intellectual”.

The cases of the Beijing Women’s Association and the China WCTU demonstrate that some women’s organisations and groups established during the wartime era were allowed to continue alongside the ACWF as an integral part of the CCP’s united-front framework. However, given the entangled relations and overlapping leaderships between the CCP-controlled ACWF and the remaining non-CCP women’s organisations, women intellectuals were confused by their multiple positions and authorities under the vaguely defined united-front framework after 1949. Liu Qingyang complained later in 1957 that “although I had many positions, I did not know how to use my authority. I had too many titles but too little time to do some real work, especially women’s work [...] I was becoming a busy bureaucrat.”⁵³⁸ More important, changes appeared in the style of communication among

⁵³⁵ Huang, “Wosuo zhidao de Liu-Wang Liming”, 142-145.

⁵³⁶ The letter from the ACWF Beijing branch to Zhang Xiaomei about the CWA, the WCTU and their leaders, August, 1952, BMA, 84-1-42.

⁵³⁷ Huang, “Wosuo zhidao de Liu-Wang Liming”, 142-145.

⁵³⁸ *Guangming Ribao*, 16 May, 1957.

women intellectuals after 1949: secret reports, self/mutual criticisms and the so-called “*jiaoxin*” talks replaced the free forums, discussions and debates that they had held during the wartime era; the Party’s intervention further made it impossible for non-CCP women intellectuals to make decisions independently. As shown in Liu Qingyang and Liu-Wang Liming’s examples, these changes not only increased the confusion and conflicts among women intellectuals from different political backgrounds, but also widened the political division between the “arrogant intellectuals” and the Party.

“Vanishing by themselves and disintegrating by themselves”

Despite the confusion and conflicts, women intellectuals’ political organisation and communication still continued in the early 1950s within the structure of the ACWF. Liu-Wang Liming, a non-CCP leader suspected of having relations with KMT secret agents, was still able to lead the China WCTU and try to defend her political autonomy. However, the “luck” Liu-Wang Liming had in the early 1950s did not last long. When the CCP’s anti-rightist campaign⁵³⁹ began in 1957, she bore the brunt and was attacked as a “big rightist” (大右派), her China WCTU was also dissolved soon after the campaign. This section therefore seeks to outline the final dissolution of the various women’s organisations and groups out of the ACWF structure in the late 1950s, although, the progress of the anti-rightist campaign which has been carefully studied by historians, is beyond the scope of my analysis.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁹ In 1956 the CCP conducted a new rectification campaign (整风运动) by welcoming criticisms from in and out of the party, but this “Hundred Flowers” experiment came to an abrupt end in 1957 with an anti-rightist campaign launched by the CCP. The attack of the “rightists” was soon directed to many prominent intellectuals, especially those who were involved with the minor political parties. Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 216.

⁵⁴⁰ For more information about the anti-rightist campaign, please see Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and after: a History of the People's Republic* (New York: the Free Press, Simon and Schuster, 1999), 155-190; and Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China*, 166-258.

During this ruthless political campaign, many women intellectuals who had been politically active during the War, such as Liu-Wang Liming and Tan Tiwu, were attacked as “big rightist”.⁵⁴¹ The broad network they had maintained across different political parties soon turned into a political minefield in which any “wrong political connection” could put one in great danger. Hu Ziyang, the erstwhile leader of the China Democratic National Construction Association⁵⁴² and the secretary-general of Shanghai Association of Industry and Commerce, sensed the possible political peril facing her. Instead of waiting for her own “political problems” to be found by others, Hu Ziyang reviewed her own experience during the War and came up with the idea of protecting herself by criticising the political and moral stance of her ex-husband Zhang Naiqi. In her article “the Zhang Naiqi I know”, Hu Ziyang used vicious words to attack Zhang Naiqi, the once well-respected economist, the leader of the National Salvation Movement and her ex-husband. She first accused Zhang of being “a political opportunist” who had invested in different political parties during the War for his own personal interests:

Zhang Naiqi used the National Salvation Association as his political stake to engage with the KMT during the War. In favour of ‘a third route’ within the Democracy League, he advocated the DL’s independence from both the KMT and the CCP. But after the KMT outlawed the DL in 1947, Zhang suddenly changed his political attitude to follow the CCP, not because he supported the CCP but because he had no other choice.⁵⁴³

The political “mistakes” made by Zhang Naiqi were not enough to prove Hu Ziyang’s own innocence; therefore as the ex-wife, she further accused Zang Naiqi of having sexual relations out of marriage during the War and never feeling ashamed for what he did.⁵⁴⁴ In this case, when Zhang Naiqi was harshly attacked during the anti-rightist campaign, Hu Ziyang was

⁵⁴¹ Huang, “Wosuo zhidao de Liu-Wang Liming”, 145-146.

⁵⁴² Commonly known as *Minjian*, one of the eight remaining minor political parties and groups after 1949.

⁵⁴³ Hu Ziyang, “Wo suozhidaode Zhang Naiqi” [The Zhang Naiqi I Know], *Renmin Ribao*, 17 July, 1957.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

able to play the victim role and to stand together with those who had been exploited by the “big rightists” like her ex-husband.

Although Hu’s criticism of Zhang Naiqi was made under intense political pressure during the anti-rightist campaign, it is still a valuable text for analysing how women intellectuals’ social and political relations were reinterpreted in the post-war context of communist China. During the political struggles in the late 1950s, the political and gender identities of intellectual women were reshaped through the narratives and memories of their wartime experience. And their narratives and memories were also reconstructed to serve new political purposes. As Hu Ziyang’s case indicates, it was politically safer for a female intellectual to be seen as a sad wife rather than an independent political activist during the War. Her political rightness was further enhanced through the politicised gender relation, in which she was the victim cheated on and abandoned by a morally wrong and politically unreliable husband who also happened to be a famous bourgeois intellectual during the War.

Liu-Wang Liming, unfortunately, did not have such a husband to blame while being attacked for her suspicious personal networks across different parties and in different countries. Simply because she had once praised the German city Bremen by saying that “I almost do not want to return to China,” Liu-Wang Liming was accused of “desiring the capitalist western world”.⁵⁴⁵ This time, a ten-page long secret report was no longer needed to prove her “guilt”—the once prominent women’s leader and war martyr’s widow thus suddenly became a “big rightist”. The political attack on Liu-Wang Liming made it convenient for the CCP to disband the women’s organisations led by her. After the anti-rightist campaign, Li Weihan, the head of the CCP Central United-Front Department called a meeting with Liu-Wang Liming at Beijing Hotel and informed her that the China WCTU would also be dissolved.⁵⁴⁶

As previously demonstrated in this thesis, the KMT had also tried to centralise women’s organisations, but all its effort was in vain due to the warfare and the government’s lack of control over local societies. Women intellectuals from the CCP and the minor political parties

⁵⁴⁵ Huang, “Wosuo zhidao de Liu-Wang Liming”, 145.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

therefore still managed to continue their across-party networking, organisation and communication after the New Fourth Army Incident. However, the CCP's entrance into the urban cities after 1949 eventually eliminated the "middle ground between state and society"⁵⁴⁷ where the diverse women's organisations, societies and networks had been located. By the end of the 1950s, the majority of women's organisations had been integrated into the ACWF framework. With regard to the remaining independent organisations and groups, the Party Committee of the ACWF implemented the policy of "no attention, no support, vanish by themselves and disintegrate by themselves" (不理不睬, 放任自流, 烟消云散, 自由瓦解) to divide and dismiss their members.⁵⁴⁸

Investigating and dissolving the North China WCTU and the Beijing Women's Association became a task of the ACWF during and after the anti-rightist campaign. By 1956, the membership of the North China WCTU had already decreased from 800 to 130, and most of its remaining members were believed to be women intellectuals from bourgeois families.⁵⁴⁹ The membership of the Beijing Women's Association also decreased from 1,300 to 823 with 62% of the remaining members classified as women intellectuals from the middle or upper class.⁵⁵⁰ Of the remaining few leaders of the North China WTCU, the ACWF believed that Chen Tongyun was a leftist while Fu Xuwen, the chair of the organisation, was a rightist. The Party Committee of the ACWF therefore entrusted Chen Tongyun to implement the "no attention, no support" policy in order to win over the members who were politically "in the middle", and to impede the activities of the rightists.⁵⁵¹ The dissolution of the Beijing Women's Association was conducted in a more efficient way. According to the

⁵⁴⁷ Diamant, *Revolutionizing the Family*, 47.

⁵⁴⁸ Shifulian dangzu guanyu funülianyihui he funüjiezhihui jinhou gongzuo xiang shiwei de baogao [The Report from the Municipal Party Group of the ACWF to the Beijing Municipal Party Committee about the Future Arrangement of the China Women's Association and the Women Christian Temperance Union], 1960, BMA, 84-1-168.

⁵⁴⁹ Zhuanghua funü jiezhihui Beijing fenhui gongzhuo gaikuang [Work Summary of the North China WCTU], 1956, BMA, 84-3-45.

⁵⁵⁰ Beijing funülianyihui gongzuo gaikuang 1949-1956, 11 September, 1956, BMA, 84-3-45, 2.

⁵⁵¹ Guanyu Beijing funü jiezhihui gongzuo de baogao [The Report on the Work of the Beijing Women Christian Temperance], 1960, BMA, 84-1-168, 3-7.

report from the ACWF to the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, all of the confirmed rightists from the Beijing Women's Association were directly arrested. After a "*jiaoxin*" talk between Liu Qingyang and the ACWF leader Zhang Xiaomei to disclose matters in confidence, the Beijing Women's Association was quietly dissolved.⁵⁵²

To make sure that all the local networks and societies of the WCTU, the YWCA and the CWA would "vanish by themselves and disintegrate by themselves", the ACWF stopped financial and political support for their activities and took over all the women's service groups, schools and kindergartens attached to these organisations. Members of these organisations were encouraged to participate in production activities in districts and streets. From 1958 onwards, the very few remaining members all participated in local production activities organised by their sub-district offices. In this way, all of the women's organisations, groups and societies which had continued outside the ACWF, finally ceased activities by 1960. And the majority of women intellectuals who had moved to Beijing after the War eventually amalgamated into the ACWF if they wanted to maintain their political positions under the united-front framework.⁵⁵³

Compared with how women intellectuals initiated and developed their political networks across party lines and political boundaries during the wartime era, the final dissolution of their diverse organisations, societies and groups appears to be abrupt and straightforward. However, the process of women intellectuals' political identification with the CCP and of the integration of their political networks into the ACWF in the 1950s was by no means simple. As Hu Ziyang's case reveals, this process not only reshaped women intellectuals' political relations and gender identities, but also altered the memories and interpretations of their wartime political experience. Liu-Wang Liming's case further shows that this process was not free of violence and resistance. The attack she endured as a "big rightist" and the compulsory dissolution of the China WCTU, on the one hand, reveals the Party's attempt to control women intellectuals' domestic and transnational networks, but on the other hand,

⁵⁵² Shifulian dangzu guanyu fun ülianyihui he fun üjiezhahui jinhou gongzuo xiang shiwei de baogao, 1960, BMA, 84-1-168.

⁵⁵³ Guanyu Beijing fun üjiezhahui gongzuo de baogao, 1960, BMA, 84-1-168, 3-7.

indicates the increasing contradictions between the “new” China and the “old” social and political relations maintained by women intellectuals during the War.

Conclusion

The Civil War and the communist takeover significantly reshaped the geo-political landscape of China and shifted the spaces for women intellectuals’ political engagement and identification. On the one hand, the socio-economic disorder in the urban areas in east China and the KMT’s purges of left-wing intellectuals resulted in women intellectuals’ further identification with the CCP. On the other hand, the broad network of social and political relations maintained by women intellectuals reinforced the CCP’s united-front framework and benefited the Party’s access to the urban sites controlled by the KMT. However, after the DL officially announced its cooperation with the CCP in 1947, the political space for women intellectuals’ cross-party networking further shrank: seeing that a middle route between the two major parties was no longer available after the CCP had secured both political and military hegemony during its final fight against the KMT, the majority of women intellectuals finally learned to the left side and joined each other in Beijing for the preparation for the establishment of the ACWF.

As Suzanne Pepper argues, most liberal intellectuals felt that they could work effectively under the CCP, albeit as a member of its “loyal opposition”.⁵⁵⁴ Women intellectuals’ identification with the CCP was marked by confusion and also reservation. On the one hand, they hoped to achieve peace and democracy along with the CCP during the Civil War, but on the other hand, they struggled to maintain their diverse political networks and defend their political autonomy after the Communist takeover. The establishment of the ACWF, however, confined women intellectuals’ political networks in the united-front framework and left little space for their independent political organisation and spontaneous activism. Although some non-CCP organisations such as the CWA and the WCTU were allowed to continue in the

⁵⁵⁴ Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle 1945-1949*, 227-228.

early 1950s, they were soon dissolved or integrated into the ACWF after the anti-rightist campaign. Suspected of being “rightists” and of maintaining unclear political relations, these previous left-wing women intellectuals had to re-identify themselves with the Party line, willingly or unwillingly adopting new political and gender identities.

The geographical, social, cultural and political spaces enlarged for women’s political participation during the War were thus eliminated under the CCP’s increasing central control over the society. As Parks Coble has argued, “the 1930s student groups, chambers of commerce, banking associations, bar associations; the YMCA, and even the Green Gang—were all either eliminated or replaced by those controlled by the CCP.”⁵⁵⁵ However, it would simplify the relations between the CCP and Chinese intellectuals if we argue that the political engagement and identification between the two, from the outset, proceeded under the CCP’s dominance. First, it was long before the communist takeover that women intellectuals had started relocating their political networks in the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association and later in the China Women’s Association, although not in the name of the CCP. The harsh political and economic conditions during the Civil War further made the realigned United Front between the CCP and the minor political parties the only choice for women intellectuals to achieve peace and democracy. Second, the CCP’s united-front framework also benefited from the network of social and political relations among women intellectuals, which not only supported the CCP to lobby around political leaders and officials from different parties and groups, but also helped the CCP obtain its political legitimacy both during the wartime period and after the takeover.

⁵⁵⁵ Coble, “The National Salvation Movement and Social Networks in Republic China Shanghai”, 130.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined women intellectuals' political networks during the wartime era. I argue that the War of Resistance enlarged the geographical, social, cultural and political spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement and networking. The geographic space was enlarged through women intellectuals' migration from the political and economic centres in east China to the hinterland, and through the circulation of their resistance networks across the geo-political boundaries between the KMT-held areas, the Japanese-occupied regions and the CCP base areas. In addition, considering their political movement as an integral part of the World War fought against fascism and dictatorship, Chinese women intellectuals also reinforced their organisation and communication beyond the geo-political borderline of wartime China. The social and cultural spaces for women's political participation were also enhanced during the War. The War provided opportunities for women intellectuals to initiate a variety of organisations, groups and societies, where they not only advocated women's equal rights and responsibilities but also discussed national affairs. Their participation in public activities further helped to increase their social statuses in the wartime society. During the War, cities such as Wuhan, Chongqing and Kunming were not only political centres for resistance, but also cultural sites where reading societies, singing groups, language classes and photo exhibitions were organised by women intellectuals to engage and mobilise the population.

More important, the political manoeuvres of both the KMT and the CCP for national resistance and the formation of political institutions such as the anti-Japanese United Front and the People's Political Council enabled and enlarged the political space for women intellectuals' cross-party networking and communication. The various political movements initiated and supported by Chinese intellectuals during the wartime era, especially the national salvation movement, the constitutionalist movement and the anti-Civil War

movement, reinforced the network development and communication among women intellectuals despite their different political affiliations. Instead of identifying themselves with either the KMT or the CCP, they engaged with different political parties and therefore connected their networks beyond party lines and political boundaries.

However, these spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement and networking were not unchanged. They shifted along with the fast changing social, economic and political conditions in wartime China. The political and cultural spaces in Shanghai, the previous hub of salvation movements led by intellectuals in the mid-1930s, changed significantly after the city had become an "orphan island" under the Japanese occupation. As a result, the majority of women intellectuals had to leave Shanghai for the hinterland in order to continue their resistance activities. Migrating from the relatively "modern" east China to the "backward" hinterland, these women intellectuals had also adapted themselves to the new social, cultural and political environment in order to develop their organisations and networks.

Moreover, the spaces for women intellectuals' political networking kept changing against the backdrop of the conflicts and negotiations between different political parties, in particular the KMT and the CCP. When the United Front was reinforced during the defence of Wuhan in 1938, the spaces for women's political participation and cross-party communication were enlarged; however after the United Front had been undermined due to the New Fourth Army Incident, these spaces started to shrink. The realignment of the United Front between the CCP and the minor political parties as an opposition against the KMT during the Civil War, furthermore, sharpened the political boundary between the left side and the right side and reduced the political spaces for women intellectuals to maintain a neutral position between the two competing parties. The communist takeover and the establishment of the ACWF in 1949 eventually resulted in the limitation of their networks under the CCP's central control and the elimination of the spaces for their independent political organisation and spontaneous activism.

The changing geographical, social, cultural and political spaces during the entire course of the War of Resistance, the following Civil War and the communist takeover significantly impacted the development, integration, transformation and breakdown of women intellectuals'

political networks. The enlargement of the spaces at the beginning of the War led to rapid circulation of resistance networks among women intellectuals and activists in east China. The development of Shen Zijiu's *Women's Life Society* exemplifies how women intellectuals from different political backgrounds in Shanghai and Nanjing expanded their resistance networks through the national salvation movement and further integrated these networks within the WAC during the defence of Wuhan. The constitutionalist movement initiated by intellectuals in Chongqing further enhanced the political spaces for women intellectuals' cross-party communication. Promoting constitutionalism, democracy and women's rights, Chinese women intellectuals not only strengthened their organisations across party lines, but also connected their networks beyond the geo-political boundaries between the KMT-controlled areas and the CCP base areas.

Departures, dislocations and displacements were also an integral part of women intellectuals' network development. The shrinking socio-political space for women's political participation after the New Fourth Army Incident resulted in the departure of many left-wing women intellectuals and the partial breakdown of their networks which had been maintained within the WAC and the People's Political Council. However, the reorganisation of left-wing women intellectuals under the SSCA Women's Committee and the China Women's Association indicates the continuity and resilience of their political networks for the purpose of achieving resistance, constitutionalism and democracy. Moreover, the growing political division between the KMT side and the CCP side did not necessarily result in the loss of cross-party communication among women intellectuals. The cases of Ni Feijun and Xie Bingxin illustrate how personal ties and social linkages can be more effective than official organisations in terms of supporting women's political engagement and communication during the War.

The spaces for women intellectuals' political networking in Kunming were different from those in the wartime capital Chongqing. The comparison between the central and the local helps me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity and flexibility of women intellectuals' political networks. Compared with the political engagement of the most privileged women leaders such as Deng Yingchao, Song Meiling and Shi Liang in Chongqing,

local women's political networking in Kunming shows different patterns. The lack of institutional, political and financial support made university campus the main space where local women intellectuals developed their networks. Competition and cooperation were both necessary for women's organisations—despite their different political affiliations—to obtain crucial political and financial resources. However, this does not mean that these local networks were isolated from those in the wartime capital. As Li Wenyi's political networking exemplifies, women intellectuals in Kunming not only grew their networks on campus and across local women's organisations in a horizontal direction but also reached out to Chongqing to enhance political engagement in a vertical direction.

The end of the War of Resistance in 1945 did not, as most women intellectuals had expected, lead to peace and democracy. The spaces for their cross-party communication and independent organisation were further reduced against the backdrop of the Civil War and the communist takeover. On the one hand, the socio-economic disorder and the KMT's purge of communists during the Civil War resulted in the divisions among and dislocations of women intellectuals' political networks. On the other hand, the CCP's united-front framework appealed to the majority of women intellectuals who had lost confidence in the Nationalist government and joined the anti-Civil War movement to promote peace and democracy. The "1949 liberation", as previously mentioned, further resulted in the integration of their diverse political networks into the structure of the ACWF under strict party control. As Chapter 6 shows, although it was a long and fragmented process marked by collaboration, confusion and resistance, the broad networks of social and political relations maintained among women intellectuals during the War, were gradually straitjacketed by the Party in the early 1950s.

From the WAC, expanded by the KMT in 1938, to the ACWF, established by the CCP in 1949, women intellectuals' political engagement and identification during the wartime era reflect the socio-political transformations in China in the 1930s and 1940s. Instead of only paying attention to individual events, movements or organisations, this thesis concentrates on women's networks and the spaces for their network development. This change of focus helps with my reinterpretation of the dynamics of war, politics and gender in 1930s and 1940s China. Important historical affairs such as the national salvation movement, the defence of

Wuhan, the constitutionalist movement, the New Fourth Army Incident and the communist takeover are understood as closely related events which continuously impact on the spaces for women intellectuals' political engagement and identification. Crucial political institutions and organisations such as the WAC, the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee, the People's Political Council, the CCP South Bureau, the Sino-Soviet Cultural association and the China Women's Association are also examined as interconnected political frameworks where women intellectuals formed and reformed their networks.

Moreover, this change of focus helps with my reinterpretation of the political landscape of wartime China. The survival and development of political parties during the wartime era feature both the cooperation and competition between them in utilising and reforming intellectuals' networks according to their own different political needs. Instead of arguing that the communist takeover puts an abrupt stop to the diverse political networks and the multiple ways of communication among women intellectuals, this thesis demonstrates how the CCP infiltrated women intellectuals' political networks during the War and secured its political hegemony before 1949, and how women intellectuals gradually gravitated to the left wing due to the shrinking spaces for their independent political organisation and neutral position after the New Fourth Army Incident. In this sense, women intellectuals' political identification with the CCP was not simply an "inevitable decision" made under the CCP's political pressure, but a fragmented process which lasted through the entire course of the War and continued after 1949.

With the above arguments made, this thesis contributes to the knowledge of Chinese wartime social and political history by emphasising the following three points: First, women intellectuals' political networks demonstrate great diversity and flexibility during the wartime era. Their political engagement was not simply a response to the political rhetoric of "national resistance", nor was it just a feminist movement with the aim to advocate women's political rights. During the wartime era, women intellectuals networked across different political parties to advocate national resistance, democracy, constitutionalism and women's political rights and to ameliorate civil conflicts. The majority of their organisations and groups, such as Shen Zijiu's *Women's Life Society*, Cao Mengjun's SSCA Women's

Committee and Li Wenyi's Joy Group, did not depend on any political party; their political engagement was not confined to any political structure or ideology. Instead, friendships, social linkages and personal ties played an important role in their political engagement and communication, while journal publishing, women's forums, dinner parties, study groups, research seminars, and career training classes supported their network development. Because of their flexible networking strategy and diverse ways of communication, women intellectuals were able to maintain their networks within and across different political parties and organisations in the wartime era despite the changing social and political conditions. In this light, the War did not lead to a total centralisation of women intellectuals' political networks under any party control; quite on the contrary, it enabled the spaces for diversity and flexibility in women's political engagement and networking.

Second, minor political parties and groups played an important role in women intellectuals' political participation. Seeking political shelter under a major party was neither an automatic nor the only political choice for women's political participation in the wartime era. It is apparent that many women intellectuals chose to join the minor political parties in the late 1930s and 1940s, in particular the National Salvation Association and later the Democratic League. Moreover, the political boundaries within women intellectuals' networks were blurred. Many women intellectuals, such as Liu Qingyang, Cao Mengjun and Ni Feijun, were actually involved in different political parties and institutions to maintain their broad contacts and effective organisation. Women intellectuals' cross-party networks, for instance Shi Liang's WAC Liaison Committee, helped with the communication between the KMT side and the CCP side in pursuing resistance and democracy, and women intellectuals from minor political parties and groups became the actual leaders in women's movements in the wartime capital. Rather than simply choosing between the KMT and the CCP, the majority of them were advocating for political reform during the War, by which they hoped to establish a democratic and constitutional government. The War diversified the political choices for women intellectuals and provided them with an opportunity to urge political cooperation and reform as the prerequisite to winning the War and building a strong nation.

Third, women intellectuals' political participation during the wartime era was not only marked by their different political roles and positions, but also by their gender identities and relations. Their identification with a "women's group" and with the "women's issues" during their political engagement was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it granted more freedom to women intellectuals to network across party lines. In her personal name, rather than on behalf of the KMT, Song Meiling summoned the Lushan Women's Summit in order to unite women leaders from different political backgrounds. The SSCA Women's Committee also benefited from the network of social and personal relations maintained among the "SSCA wives", whose husbands were serving with the opposing political parties. These friendships and personal ties maintained among women intellectuals also influenced the relations between male political leaders during the War. For instance, Deng Yingchao had made friends with Ni Feijun long before Ni's husband, the KMT higher official He Yaozu decided to launch a peaceful uprising and go to Beijing in 1949. On the other hand, gender roles and identities also restricted women intellectuals' political engagement. The backlash against women's political participation happened immediately after the New Fourth Army Incident; the women's movement was condemned by the government and women activists were exhorted to go home to shoulder domestic responsibilities. Some women intellectuals, such as An E and Bai Wei, encountered contradictions between their political roles and their gender roles and their political positions were usually conditioned by their gender identities. Therefore, instead of arguing that the War turned women into independent political activists and leaders, this thesis has revealed the complex interactions between women intellectuals' political roles and their gender roles, which are essential to understanding the nature of their political networks.

This thesis also has its limitations. First of all, it has concentrated on women's political networks, while little has been said about men's political networks during the War. Because of this, this thesis lacks a comparison between the networks maintained among women intellectuals and those among their male peers. Second, apart from chapter 5, this thesis mainly focuses on the most prominent women leaders and intellectuals during the War and therefore does not pay enough attention to those comparatively less famous women

intellectuals who were active in different local organisations. Third, although this thesis has covered many KMT women's organisations, it did not examine the relocation of KMT women's networks to Taiwan in the late 1940s and early 1950s. And last, although chapter 6 briefly touches on the anti-rightist campaign in 1957 which led to the final dissolution of women's organisations outside of the ACWF structure, it does not examine the further transformations of women intellectuals' social and political relations under the ACWF in the Maoist era.

These limitations are caused by the scope of this research project and the range of my primary materials, and they help raise interesting questions for further research. I am particularly interested in the changes in Chinese intellectual circles from the 1950s onwards. Wang Zheng has argued that the founding of the Women's Federation in 1949 marked the closing of the social space for Chinese women's spontaneous activism that had been created and developed since the May Fourth era; while at the end of the Maoist era, Chinese intellectuals demanded reopening that space.⁵⁵⁶ However, this point of view might simplify women intellectuals' political engagement and identification in the Maoist era. To integrate their independent organisations within the ACWF is one thing, but to abandon the diversity, flexibility and autonomy in their networking and communication would be quite another. Eddy U has suggested researchers pay more attention to the different social groups under the redefined category of "intellectuals" in the Maoist era, in particular to those non-elite intellectuals who assisted or resisted the implementation of top-down policies with respect to intellectuals.⁵⁵⁷ Research on women intellectuals' political re-accommodation in Maoist China, with attention to the non-elite groups and the local level, therefore, will extend the scope of my PhD research and further the understanding of both the "closing" and "reopening" of the spaces for women intellectuals' independent political organisation and spontaneous activism.

⁵⁵⁶ Wang Zheng, "Maoism, Feminism, and the UN Conference on Women: Women's Studies Research on Contemporary China", *Journal of Women's History* Vol.8 No. 4 (1997): 133.

⁵⁵⁷ Eddy U, "The Making of *Zhishifenzi*: The Critical Impact of the Registration of Unemployed Intellectuals in the Early PRC", *The China Quarterly* 173 (2003): 121.

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Appendix

List of the key women intellectuals in this thesis:

An E (安娥 1905-1976) Having studied at the National Art School, An E was a playwright, lyricist and poet. During the War, An E went to Wuhan and helped found the NARC. She and her lover, the famous composer Tian Han moved from Wuhan to Chongqing, and then to Guilin and Kunming in the 1940s. In 1948, An E and Tian Han went to Xibaipo and later they moved to Beijing in 1949.

Bai Wei (白薇 1894-1987) Having studied in Japan, Bai Wei returned to China in 1926 and became a famous writer of the League of Left-wing Writers in 1930s Shanghai. During the War, she went to Wuhan and then to Guilin and Chongqing. In Chongqing, she joined the CWA. After 1949, she worked at the China National Youth Theatre in Beijing.

Cao Mengjun (曹孟君 1904-1967) Cao Mengjun studied at Peking University between 1925 and 1927 before moving to Nanjing to work. She joined the CCP when she was studying in Beijing but lost contact with the Party after 1927. In Nanjing, she became a staff member at the Ministry of Industry. During the National Salvation Movement, Cao and her friends organised a women's reading group and founded the Nanjing Women's Association for Cultural Promotion. In 1937, Cao left Nanjing for Wuhan, where she dedicated herself to the work of the NARC and protected hundreds of refugee children in their long travel to Chongqing. In Chongqing, Cao took over the journal *Women's Life* from Shen Ziji after Shen had left. And in 1943, she launched a new women's journal entitled *Modern Women*, the organ of the SSCA Women's Committee. In 1946 Cao moved to Shanghai but soon left for Hong Kong. In early 1949, together with the group of intellectuals who had gone to Hong Kong from the mainland during the Civil War, Cao went to Beijing. In 1949, she became a member of the ACWF executive committee.

Chen Bo'er (陈波儿 1907-1951) As a film star in Shanghai, Chen joined the National Salvation Association in the late 1930s and joined the CCP in 1937. Chen left Shanghai for Wuhan in 1938 and proposed to establish the NARC. She then left Wuhan for Yan'an. In early 1939, she joined the "warzone investigation group" and went to Shanxi to visit local women and children. After travelling across the borders of Shanxi, Chahar (today's east Inner Mongolia and north Hebei) and Hebei for more than a year, Chen arrived in Chongqing in 1940 and participated in the women's constitutional forums organised by the WAC. After the War of Resistance, Chen went to Manchuria and established the Manchuria Film Studio.

Hu Ziying (胡子婴 1907-1982) In the 1930s, Hu studied in Zhejiang and worked for the Shanghai Press of Commerce. In 1935, Hu joined the Shanghai Women's National Salvation

Association. After the fall of Shanghai, she moved to Chongqing via Hong Kong and participated in the work of the NARC. In Chongqing, Hu also joined the SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA. In 1945, together with democratic intellectuals in Chongqing such as Zhang Naiqi and Huang Yanpei, she helped found the China Democratic National Construction Association (*Minjian*). During the Civil War, Hu stayed in Shanghai and participated in the demonstration in Nanjing to urge the KMT to stop the Civil War and to realise peace and democracy. After 1949, Hu became the secretary-general of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Industry and Commerce.

Lao Junzhan (劳君展 1900-1976) Having studied Mathematics and Radiological Physics in France, Lao Junzhan returned to China in 1927. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Lao was teaching in different universities across the country. During the War, Lao and her husband Xu Deheng went to Chongqing, where she was affiliated with both the KMT Central Women's Movement Committee and the CWA. In 1946, Lao and Xu established the Jiu-san Society. After 1949, Lao taught at Peking University and Renmin University.

Li Dequan (李德全 1896-1972) In 1924, Li Dequan married the famous warlord General Feng Yuxiang. In 1930s Nanjing, Li supported women's organizations for national resistance and participated in the National Salvation Movement. In 1938, Li Dequan went to Wuhan and helped found the NARC. In Chongqing, Li chaired both the SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA. In 1946, Li followed General Feng to the U.S. and attended the World Congress of Women in New York. She returned to China in late 1948. In 1949, Li was elected as the vice chair of the ACWF. She was also the first Minister of Health in the PRC.

Li Wenyi (李文宜 1903-1997) Li Wenyi joined the CCP in 1926. In 1928 she went to Moscow University to study. In 1932 she was expelled from the CCP as a political dissident due to the Party's internal struggle and personal politics. When the War broke out in 1937, Li participated in local women's resistance organisations in Hubei and joined women intellectuals from across the country for the defence of Wuhan in 1938. In 1943, Li went to Kunming to develop a left-wing women's network. During this period, she joined the Democratic League and led the Yunnan branch of the CWA (Yunnan Women's Association). As a member of the DL Yunnan branch, Li went to Hong Kong in 1947 to help with the re-organisation of the DL. In early 1949, Li went to Beijing. She participated in the preparation for the establishment of the ACWF and became a member of the ACWF standing committee.

Liu Qingyang (刘清扬 1894-1977) In 1920, Liu Qingyang went to Paris to study and joined the CCP in 1921. In 1924, Liu joined the KMT to work under the KMT Central Women's Department led by He Xiangning during the National Revolution (1924-1927). She kept working with KMT women's organizations until the final split of the two parties in 1927. In the 1930s, Liu led the Women's National Salvation Association in Beiping. In 1938, Liu went to Wuhan where she joined the NARC and became the training director of the WAC in Wuhan. After the fall of Wuhan, Liu moved to Chongqing where she joined the Democratic

League and became a founding member of both the SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA. In 1946, Liu went back to Beijing to lead the Beijing branch of the CWA (the later Beijing Women's Association). After 1949, Liu became a member of the ACWF executive committee. She also remained the chair of the Beijing Women's Association until the mid 1950s.

Liu-Wang Liming (刘王立明 1897-1970) In 1916 Liu-Wang Liming went to study biology in the United States where she met Frances Willard, the president of the World WCTU. In 1920, she returned to Shanghai and established the Chinese branch of WCTU. In the 1920s, Liu-Wang was an active supporter of the women's suffrage movement and one of the founders of the Shanghai Women's Suffrage Association. In the 1930s, she took part in the National Salvation Movement in Shanghai. During the War, she moved to Chongqing and attended the conferences of the People's Political Council as one of the few female delegates. She also joined the SSCA Women's Committee, the Democratic League and the CWA. After the Democratic League had been outlawed by the KMT in 1947, Liu-Wang first went to Hong Kong and then to Beijing in early 1949. She served on the Standing Committee of the ACWF and acted as the leader of the China WCTU in the early 1950s.

Ni Feijun (倪斐君 1912-1966) Ni Feijun graduated from a school of obstetrics in Shanghai and worked as a midwife in Nanjing in the 1930s. She married He Yaozu, a KMT senior official who later became the Mayor of Chongqing. During the War, Ni Feijun led the Chongqing Women's Service Group for Refugees and supported left-wing women's organisations in the wartime capital. After the War, Ni went to study medicine at the South-eastern Medical College in Shanghai. In 1949, after He had launched a peaceful uprising in Hong Kong, the couple went to Beijing.

Shen Zijiu (沈兹九 1898-1989) Having studied art in Japan, Shen Zijiu returned to China in 1925 and started teaching at a girls' middle school near Shanghai. In 1934, Shen became the editor of "*Women's Garden*", the supplement of *Shen Bao* and in 1935 she launched the journal *Women's Life* in Shanghai. Shen was a founding member of the Shanghai Women's National Salvation Association. After the fall of Shanghai in 1937, Shen moved to Wuhan and became the director of the WAC Cultural Department. She moved to Chongqing in 1938 and then left for the base of the New Fourth Army in 1940. After the New Fourth Army Incident, she escaped to Hong Kong and then went to Singapore. After the fall of Singapore, she and her husband Hu Yuzhi fled to Sumatra and stayed there until the end of the War in 1945. In 1948, Shen and Hu left Singapore for Xibaipo. In 1949, Shen became a member of the ACWF standing committee and of the DL central committee.

Shi Liang (史良 1900-1985) Having graduated from the Shanghai University of Law, Shi Liang became a lawyer in 1930s Shanghai. During the National Salvation Movement, she became one of the important female leaders of the National Salvation Association. In 1936, Shi went to Nanjing together with other NSA members to petition for fighting against the Japanese and was arrested by the KMT. After she had been released in 1937, Shi went to

Wuhan and joined the WAC as the director of its Liaison Committee. As one of the few female delegates, Shi Liang participated in the People's Political Council during the War. In Chongqing, she helped found the SSCA Women's Committee and joined the Democratic League. In 1945, Shi helped found the CWA. Shi Liang remained in Shanghai during the Civil War and moved to Beijing in 1949. She then became a member of the ACWF Executive Committee and the first Minister of Justice in the PRC.

Tan Tiwu (谭惕吾 1902-1997) Having graduated from Peking University, Tan worked at the Ministry of the Interior in Nanjing in the 1930s. She joined Cao Mengjun in organising the Nanjing Women's Association for Cultural Promotion and participated in the National Salvation Movement. Tan moved to Wuhan in 1938 and joined the NARC. Working as a KMT civil servant, Tan maintained her network among the KMT left wing and kept her wide connections with both non-partisans and communist activists. In Chongqing she joined the SSCA Women's Committee and the CWA. In 1946, Tan moved back to Nanjing to lead the Nanjing branch of the CWA. During the Civil War, she was elected to be a KMT legislator, and she also became the leader of the Revolutionary Committee of the Kuomintang (*Minge*) in Nanjing. After 1949, Tan was appointed as an advisor to the Government Administration Council of the PRC.

Xie Bingxin (谢冰心 1900-1999) Having graduated from Wellesley College in the U.S., Xie became one of the most famous writers in modern and contemporary China. In 1940, Xie moved to Chongqing with her husband Wu Wenzao and their five children. She replaced Shen Zijiu as the director of the WAC Cultural Department and participated in the People's Political Council as a delegate. One year later, she withdrew from the WAC and moved into a cottage in the Geleshan Mountain to continue writing. In 1946, Xie followed her husband to Tokyo, where she taught Chinese literature at Tokyo University. The couple returned to China in 1951.